

STRATEGIC FIVE-YEAR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT PLAN

FOR

TITLE I

**OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998
(WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEMS)**

AND

THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

for the period of

July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2005

FULL PLAN MODIFICATION

Mississippi WIA State Plan *Table of Contents*

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ATTACHMENTS

No Change. Attachments not included in modification.

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|--------------|---|--|
| Attachment A | - | JTPA Service Delivery Areas (Map) |
| Attachment B | - | WIA Workforce Investment Areas (Map) |
| Attachment C | - | State Policy Number 2
Local Workforce Investment Board Appointment and Certification Policy |
| Attachment D | - | State Policy Number 5
Eligible Provider Certification Policy |
| Attachment E | - | State Policy Number 6
Individual Training Account Policy |
| Attachment F | - | Plan Comments Received
<i>(Available for review at the Mississippi Development Authority - Employment Training Division, 501 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi.)</i> |
| Attachment G | - | Baseline Data
<i>(Available for review at the Mississippi Development Authority - Employment Training Division, 501 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi.)</i> |
| Attachment H | - | PY 2000 Wagner-Peyser Act Agriculture Services Submission
<i>(Available for review at the Mississippi Development Authority - Employment Training Division, 501 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi.)</i> |
| Attachment I | - | 2000 Crop Acreage Intentions
<i>(Available for review at the Mississippi Development Authority - Employment Training Division, 501 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi.)</i> |

STRATEGIC FIVE-YEAR STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT PLAN FOR TITLE I OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998 (WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEMS) AND THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

For the period beginning July 1, 2002-

MODIFICATION DESCRIPTION

This document provides the additional information to address the following:

1. Approved performance goals for Program Years 2003 and 2004. (Page 63-64)
2. Performance improvement plan to address the older youth credential rate measure. (Page 65-67)
3. Updated signatory and liaison information. (Page 70)

The plan is reproduced in its entirety with the additional requested information highlighted in **bold** type.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mississippi's Workforce Investment Plan recognizes the varying state of implementation readiness in different parts of the state. Based on discussions with employment and training professionals, primary emphasis for transition and implementation will be given to establishing and implementing the one-stop system for adults during Program Year 1999.

Since the enactment of the Mississippi Workforce Education Act of 1994, deliberate efforts have been made to link the various federal and state employment and training programs. In 1993 the State Job Training Coordinating Council adopted policy to align Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) goals and strategies with those adopted by the State Workforce Development Council established pursuant to the Mississippi Workforce Education Act. Additionally, for the past three years, JTPA Title III- 40% funds have been matched with state funds to outstation employment service staff at the state and locally funded community college career centers. This outstationing provided better services to dislocated workers by encouraging and facilitating the enrollment of profiled individuals and individuals participating in rapid response activities in retraining programs offered by the local service delivery areas. Linking JTPA with the community college career centers also provided eligible participants with a multitude of services including adult basic education, workforce skills enhancement, customized industry training, vocational education, and soft skills training such as leadership, team building, making decisions, etc.

The outstationing of employment service staff at the community college career centers also facilitated the coordination of services to the employer community. Employers have ready access to state funded skills enhancement and customized training for their employees that also qualifies them for both state and federal tax credits. Moreover, the community college career centers aide employers in the establishment of continuous improvement systems based on the Baldrige principals. Of special note, several of the community college career centers have adopted continuous improvement practices and have received the state quality award modeled after the national Baldrige award program.

As relationships between the staffs of the employment service and community college skill centers matured, new ways of integrating services and staff functions evolved. In one location, the Mississippi Employment Security Commission relocated an unemployment insurance office at a community college career center. In other locations, staff of the two agencies have merged employer contact and tracking systems. To help alleviate the adverse affects of plant closures, the local community college career centers have worked closely with the state dislocated worker unit, employment service, and the local service delivery area to plan and implement readjustment and retraining programs for dislocated workers. Further coordination between JTPA and state funded workforce training efforts was realized when cross membership on private industry councils and local community college district workforce councils occurred. Additionally, the service delivery areas strengthened their working partnerships with the community college career centers and the employment services.

To serve dislocated workers more efficiently, Title III- 40% funds were used in partnership with Wagner-Peyser funds to establish resource rooms in areas of the state with greater concentrations of dislocated workers. To date, 8 of the state's 20 primary employment service offices have resource rooms. These resource rooms are often featured in local TV news spots--especially when a large plant closure has occurred. This resource has proved to be a popular customer friendly addition to the employment service offices.

Using a variety of funding sources including Wagner-Peyser, JTPA, one-stop grant, unemployment insurance, and Y2K grants, the Mississippi Employment Security Commission (MESC) is quickly establishing the ability to offer customer-friendly access to internet-based services for its customers. MESC is facilitating this information systems change by connecting with the state frame relay backbone that is used by other state agencies and educational entities. Additionally, using special grant funds, MESC is improving labor market information availability and quality.

As the state proceeded in the development of its Department of Labor funded one-stop implementation grant, both state and local stakeholders recognized the value of the state funded community college career centers. The challenge has been reconciling the difference in governance structures between the state legislation and JTPA. The State Workforce Education Act requires the board of trustees for each of the 15 legislatively established community college districts to appoint a district workforce council. The membership requirements for the district workforce council are substantially similar to local workforce boards required under WIA. The State Workforce Development Council, as mandated by the State Workforce Education Act, includes a private sector member from each of the 15 district councils, the Governor, the executive directors of 6 state agencies, a private sector chair appointed by the Governor, a service provider, organized labor, and the State Literacy Resource Center.

Mississippi is currently served by five JTPA service delivery areas. Five counties on the gulf coast are served by the Gulf Coast Service Delivery Area; Hinds County is a single county service delivery area; six counties surrounding Hinds County represent a third service area; eight counties in Northeast Mississippi are administered by a separate service area; and the remaining 62 counties represent one large, rural area with the Governor serving as the chief elected official (see Attachment A). With the exception of one area, the service delivery area boundaries do not coincide with any other geographic districting within the state nor do community colleges and planning and development districts share similar areas. One service delivery area coincides with one planning and development district.

Prior to Mississippi's local roll-out of the one-stop implementation grant, Congress enacted the Workforce Investment Act. This legislation allows the state greater opportunity to align state and federal employment and training activities. Therefore, Mississippi's transition plan outlines

the process and time line to be followed in accomplishing this alignment and implementing the Workforce Investment Act.

I. Plan Development Process

A. State Plan Development Process

The State of Mississippi submitted a Transition Plan under Option 2. Since the State submitted the youth portion of the plan on December 20, 1999, the April 1 submission is the second amendment. Believing that a viable full state plan is the result of cooperation, collaboration and partnerships, Mississippi has included every level of the workforce development community in developing and reviewing the full plan before April 1, 2000. The State of Mississippi has a history of cooperative involvement of workforce development issues among state and local partners that it intends to continue with the implementation of the WIA. Beginning in 1994, the Mississippi Development Authority, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC), and the Mississippi Employment Security Commission entered a partnership to enhance service offerings at the community college career centers. These centers resulted from the Mississippi Workforce and Education Act passed by the Mississippi Legislature. JTPA funds were leveraged with Wagner-Peyser funds to expand services within the community/junior college system.

Then, in August 1996, the Governor established the One-Stop Interagency Executive Council (OSIEC) comprised of state and local entities to organize workforce programs and services statewide. This Council was responsible for maximizing cooperation among state agencies, eliminating duplication, and coordinating planning to ensure efficient and effective employment and training services. The OSIEC agencies made significant strides in coordination and understanding among the partner agencies. With the passage of the Workforce Investment Act in August 1998, the efforts of the OSIEC were put on hold.

On September 2, 1998, the Special Task Force for Economic Development Planning released a report entitled "Seizing the Future: On the Right Track." This report included the following recommendations:

- < Consolidate all workforce-training funds into a single entity.
- < Increase the ability of high school graduates to be more productive in the workplace.
- < Implement a strategic resources action plan.
- < Implement the science and technology action plan.
- < Study the long-term economic impact of gaming in Mississippi.

During the 1999 general session, the Mississippi Legislature adopted and funded several of these recommendations. Senate Bill 2796 merged all employer customized training programs under the Mississippi Community and Junior Colleges Board. Senate Bill 2156 addressed the high school graduate performance goals by decreasing the ability of public schools to socially promote students. House Bill 1221 provided \$20,000 to each county as seed monies for the development of regional economic strategic planning. Senate Bill 2856 established the Mississippi Technology Incorporated to coordinate policy development, strategic planning, and implementation of programs promoting technology-related economic development issues. Additionally, the Institutions of Higher Learning was funded to study the impact of gaming.

Because of this report and the meetings of key partners responsible for the implementation of the WIA, the Governor called a Workforce Development Summit on December 14, 1998. More than 150 government and business leaders attended the Summit. Presentations from the National Association of Private Industry Councils and the USDOL Solicitors Office regarding WIA were made. The OSIEC partners and others made statements about their roles and participation in WIA. At the closing of the Summit, the attendees were invited to submit white papers outlining their positions regarding the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act by January 5, 1999. After receipt and review of white papers, the Governor decided to appoint the State Workforce Investment Board according to the criteria in the WIA.

As a result, the Governor signed Executive Order Number 795 on February 16, 1999, establishing the Workforce Investment Board. Then, on April 22, 1999, the first meeting of the Board was conducted. At this meeting, the procedures for the designation of the local workforce investment areas and a policy for the appointment of local boards were determined. At the second meeting, held on June 22, 1999, three task forces were designated to assist in the development of the state plan through strategic planning and policies for training related and one-stop implementation for WIA.

These task forces have vital roles in creating a viable, comprehensive plan and in ensuring collaboration among partner agencies. The membership of the task forces include representatives of the local elected officials, local workforce boards, youth councils, business community, labor organizations, educators, vocational rehabilitation agencies, interested service providers, welfare agencies, transportation providers, and advocates.

The Strategic Planning Task Force sets the stage and direction for future development. Staff of the Mississippi Special Task Force on Economic Development Planning serve as resources to the Strategic Planning Task Force. This task force established the vision and goals to direct the efforts of the other two groups. The other two task forces meet concurrently as appropriate to address issues specific to their topics. At the conclusion of their research and collaboration, the task forces presented their recommendations to the State Workforce Investment Board for action. Final recommendations were incorporated into the state plan. As these meetings were widely advertised and open to the public, many interested parties attended. However, to ensure full comment and input opportunities, the State mailed draft policies incorporated in the plan for wide dissemination.

The draft state plan was available for a 30-day comment period beginning August 15, 1999 and filed with the Secretary of State consistent with Mississippi's administrative procedures. The availability of the plan was advertised in state and local newspapers. Notice of the final plan was provided to local elected officials, federal, State and local partners, fiscal agents of workforce investment areas, community colleges, community based organizations, and other interested entities. The plan was posted on the Mississippi Development Authority website and copies were made available upon request. Additionally, notice of the proposed plan was sent to appropriate state and local agencies. Comments and input will be included in the development of the final Strategic Five-Year State Workforce Investment Plan.

B. Comments

Comments received from all reviewers were considered in the development of both the transition and full state plans. A copy of the comments received as a result of both the transition and final plan review process are provided in Attachment F. The following

paragraphs describe how the comments were considered in finalizing both plans prior to their individual submission.

1. Transition Plan Comments

The Gulf Coast Business Services Corporation, a JTPA SDA, provided several comments on the draft plan. First, the SDA questioned the sections of the plan that referenced services received by dislocated workers at community college career centers and recommended that statistics be added to the Executive Summary to substantiate the references. These statistics were incorporated accordingly. Secondly, the SDA stated that they did not believe that the district workforce councils described in the Executive Summary met the "substantially similar" requirement of WIA. Although the state believes that the membership of the district workforce councils required by state law are "substantially similar" to WIA local workforce investment board requirements, the referenced section was amended to eliminate further concerns. The state has issued a Local Workforce Investment Board Appointment Policy that does not recognize any alternate entity. The third comment recommended that appropriate cites to official documents abolishing earlier councils be added to Paragraph B.1. This citation was added. The fourth comment stated that the State Plan should include "hold harmless" clauses for allocating funds to workforce areas during the first two years of WIA. The state disagrees with this comment and did not alter the plan. The last comment asks for a further explanation of planning grants to fiscal agents. Since the state plans to transmit detailed guidance to fiscal agents regarding planning grants, no changes to the plan were made for this purpose.

The Three Rivers Planning and Development District, a JTPA SDA, requested an extension of the date by which eligible service delivery areas must submit requests for temporary designation. The draft calendar was amended to permit this extension. Hinds County, a JTPA SDA, recommended that listings of possible one-stop centers be added. Although the transition plan was not amended to incorporate such listings, the final plan may include such listings based on policies developed by the One-Stop Service Delivery System Task Force and adopted by the State Workforce Investment Board. Hinds County also recommended that the transition plan include specific details regarding closeout of JTPA. Policies regarding JTPA closeout will be issued in documents separate from this plan.

The Mississippi Department of Human Services provided replacement language for sections of the plan referencing rehabilitation services. These sections were amended accordingly.

2. Final Plan Comments

Numerous comments were received on the proposed one-stop certification procedures and minimum certification standards for local sites. The majority of the comments stated that the policy was too complex, prescriptive, and time consuming to implement. Some comments from fiscal agents of workforce investment areas indicated that the policy infringed on the authority and responsibility of local elected officials and local workforce investment boards. Comments from state agency partners suggested alternate wording of various sections. As a result of these comments, the final draft plan was amended. The final policy regarding certification of one-stop centers requires adherence to the WIA and subsequent regulations. All other provisions of the draft policy were incorporated in a technical assistance guide.

A few comments were received regarding the eligible provider process including adding public secondary school districts to the automatic entities, adding the youth competency system to the program description, and requiring performance information for automatic entities be mandated. The policy was not amended for these purposes.

The Mississippi Department of Human Services commented on the "priority of services" determination policy and advised that historically the department received sufficient funding to provide services to TANF work program participants.

Additionally, the department stated that it will continue to analyze the policy and the possible impact on services to TANF work program participants.

4. Modification Comments

No comments on the modification have been received.

II. State Vision and Goals

A. Goals

The State Workforce Investment Board's Strategic Planning Committee is charged with the development and recommendation of a strategic workforce development plan. The final plan includes the state's vision for the future workforce, workforce goals, strategies for achieving the goals, and indicators to measure performance and progress. Goals and measures follow.

1. Mississippi will have a self-sufficient and fully-employed workforce that is educated, trained, comfortable with a structured work environment and possessing a strong work ethic.
 - a. The number of individuals who obtain a high school equivalent degree (GED program) will increase 5% annually;
 - b. The number of individuals who complete an associate degree in professional - technical education will increase 5% annually;
 - c. The number of individuals who complete an occupational, vocational or career certificate will increase 5% annually;
 - d. The number of individuals who complete a baccalaureate degree will increase 5% annually;
 - e. The number of individuals who begin to earn income so that they qualify and apply for the Earned Income Tax Credits will increase by 3% annually while the number of individuals receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit more than two years will decrease by 3% annually;
 - f. The average weekly earning for Mississippians will increase 10% faster than the U.S. average weekly earnings annually;
 - g. The number of high school dropouts will decrease 2% annually; and
 - h. The labor force participation rate will increase 1% annually.
2. The Mississippi Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system will meet the needs of all employers and individuals in a cost-efficient and effective manner.
 - a. The usage of the WIA system by employers and job seekers will increase 5% annually;
 - b. Annual surveys of employers and job seekers will be made to determine if the needs are being met and if improvements of the WIA system are needed;
 - c. The number of visits to the WIA Internet Site will increase 3% annually;
 - d. The cost per self-access service for users of the WIA system will decrease 3% annually;

- e. The number of job orders filled by the WIA system will increase 3% annually; and
- f. The average time that a customer waits at a one-stop center prior to being served will decrease annually with a goal of no more than 20 minutes.
- 3. The Mississippi workforce investment system process will be clear, concise, simple, accountable, inclusive, easy to use, and will maintain local workforce investment board authority.
 - a. Each local WIA board's state negotiated performance measures will be met or exceeded annually;
 - b. Customer satisfaction will increase over 5 years;
 - c. The WIA system will implement a continuous quality improvement process that seeks ongoing feedback and input from state agencies, local workforce investment boards, local elected officials and customers, including employers, to improve the statewide system; and
 - d. The WIA system will implement an on-going data collection system that minimizes the number of forms used to collect the relevant data.
- 4. The Mississippi workforce investment system will provide easy access to all Mississippians.
 - a. Customer satisfaction rates for employers and individuals using the WIA system will increase annually;
 - b. The percentage of unemployed workers, employers, poverty level recipients, individuals with disabilities, individuals who are older Americans, individuals who are veterans, small businesses, and youths using the WIA system will increase annually; and
 - c. The number of services available to all customers will increase in each local workforce investment area over five years.

The above goals are consistent for all recipients of WIA funds. Embedded in the measures for meeting the goals are indicators that are relevant to the youth population. These include:

- The number of individuals who obtain a high school equivalent degree will increase 5% annually;
- The number of individuals who complete an associate degree in professional technical education will increase 5% annually;
- The number of individuals who complete an occupational, vocational or career certificate will increase 5% annually;
- The number of individuals who complete a baccalaureate degree will increase 5% annually;
- The number of high school dropouts will decrease 2% annually;
- The percentage of youth using the WIA system will increase annually.

Core strategies for implementation of the state workforce investment strategic plan were approved. These core strategies, listed below, are guidelines for local workforce areas to use as they shape their one-stop delivery system and youth programs.

- 1. Proactively communicate to all citizens of the state, sharing information and building consensus on common visions and goals;
- 2. Create an Education and Marketing Council within the State Workforce Investment Board that utilizes available resources from all state agencies to formulate bold public

- awareness and marketing campaigns emphasizing the importance of skills and education to successful careers and economic self-sufficiency;
3. Encourage and develop bold, effective leadership for the workforce development system and develop outstanding staff capacity through extensive training and cross-training;
 4. Develop operational plans that are based on employer and worker needs. Business and industry will be an integral part of the development and validation of education and workforce initiatives. Workers will be facilitated to move into employment and better employment;
 5. Adopt broad, statewide policies and practices that allow local flexibility to develop simplified, accessible, comprehensive service delivery for all Mississippians;
 6. Promote initiatives that connect education and skill enhancement with improved worker/employer economic conditions;
 7. Employ a common intake and information system using the best available and cost effective technologies using available resources from all state agencies; and
 8. Implement strategies that focus on expanding and simplifying service delivery for workers and employers and account for those improvements through consistent performance measures.

B. Vision

The State Workforce Investment Board has approved a vision along with values and guiding principles to guide the development of the state-wide system. The vision reads:

The Mississippi vision for workforce development is a competitive, robust, fully employed workforce that adds value for existing employers, and for potential employers competing to come to Mississippi and that improves the quality of life for all Mississippians. This vision will be accomplished through the Mississippi Workforce Investment System, a cohesive public/private collaboration with strong local input, built on the effective and efficient interaction of Workforce Investment System Partners and the employers of the state's workforce.

The workforce system is to be built and operated at the state and local levels on the values and guiding principles listed below:

1. Provide result-oriented services;
2. Provide value-added services for employers and job seekers;
3. Maximize synergism and teamwork among all partners, which reduces duplication of effort;
4. Provide comprehensive, customer driven, fair, and honest service;
5. Provide simple and user-friendly services;
6. Provide services in a flexible, responsive and timely manner to all customer groups and their needs;
7. Provide innovative approaches and services;
8. Improve the quality of the system continuously;
9. Collaborate and bring all possible resources to bear on workforce development;
10. Provide services that promote individual self-worth to prepare workers for jobs;
11. Ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities;
12. Ensure universal acceptance by the customers and the communities within the state;

13. Encourage a work-first approach, understanding that additional services and/or training may be required to promote individual self-worth, employability, and career potential and to fulfill employer-hiring needs.

With an unemployment rate remaining generally under 5% during the past years and the demand for more highly technical skills for the employment future, the State Workforce Investment Board recognizes the importance of building the state's workforce from within the young people in our state. Thus, education and skills development are necessities to ensure a productive career for this group. No longer can the state consider the development of its people as a secondary factor to the economic development of the area. It is the focal point of a strong economic climate for business and a higher standard of living for the individual.

Focusing on decreasing dropouts, increasing individual self-esteem, developing basic skills and a strong work ethic, and increasing technical and educational credentials are priorities for working with youth. Through a combination of summer and year-around activities, young people will be able to transition easily into suitable and needed jobs upon graduation from high school or additional post-secondary education. Measuring performance against the various goals will indicate the success that is being achieved with special target groups such as youth.

C. Performance Indicators

Baseline performance information has been provided. The state has requested additional information from the U. S. Department of Labor regarding performance measures and the process for negotiating performance measures. Expected levels of performance for each of the Core Indicators and Customer Satisfaction Indicators will be provided upon receipt of the additional information. The state has requested a negotiation date to ensure the reaching of agreement by June 30, 2000.

III. Assessment:

A. Market Analysis

1. Trends

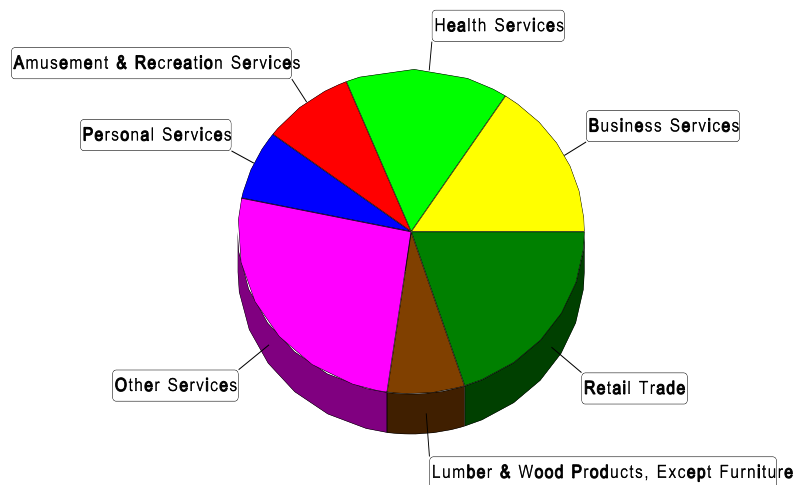
Mississippi is composed of 82 counties, situated between the Gulf of Mexico on the south and the State of Tennessee on the northern border, and lying westward from the State of Alabama to the Mississippi River. Jackson, the capital, is the largest city, with a 1990 census population estimated at 196,640. The Gulf Coast metropolitan area is the only other contiguous area with a population over 150,000 people. A majority of the state's total population is found from Jackson southward to the Gulf Coast. The northern areas of the state are mostly rural and, with some notable exceptions, remain largely agricultural.

The population of persons who are aged fourteen and older should reach over 2.1 million during PY 1999 and that growth is expected to continue slowly but steadily in most areas, with urban areas generally growing at a faster pace and rural areas either declining or remaining virtually constant. The number of whites will be roughly double that of nonwhites. For the most part, Mississippi's minorities are unevenly dispersed throughout the state. There are four counties with more than a 75 percent nonwhite population, and four with less than a 10 percent nonwhite population. However, only 24 of the state's 82 counties recorded a nonwhite majority. Females will outnumber males by a wide margin.

A majority of the population of Mississippi will have attained at least a high school level of education in PY 1999. Of those with 12 or more years of education, over half will have earned at least some college credit. White males, 25 to 34 years of age are

projected to account for the single largest sector of the labor force. Better than 3/5 of working age people are expected to participate in the labor force during PY 1999. The civilian labor force has grown since 1993 and is projected to reach 1,293,500 during PY 1999. Seasonal employment does effect the labor force; however, over the long term, the labor force has shown a steady growth pattern and forecasts are for this to continue. It should continue to increase by about one-half percent per year. Continuing a long-term trend, the number of jobs in the non-manufacturing sector is expected to grow at a faster pace than those in the manufacturing industry groups. Mississippi has experienced a decline in manufacturing employment with only lumber and wood, nonelectrical machinery and metal industries posting any significant gains. Transportation equipment and apparel have lost the most jobs since 1993 with the losses being traced to a decline in government contracts and to foreign relocation of Mississippi firms. A continuation of this trend is expected. Lumber and wood, furniture, and nonelectrical machinery groups are expected to post the most growth among manufacturing industries over the next few years. The following chart illustrates the fastest growing industries in Mississippi as compiled from the Mississippi Occupational Information System.

FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRIES



Economic and socioeconomic conditions in Mississippi have lagged behind other areas of the nation. Low education levels, particularly among ethnic minorities, have contributed to a lack of skilled labor in many areas. This translates into lower incomes and an inability to attract certain types of industry to such locales. Over time, this has led to population migration to other places where job opportunities might be perceived to be more plentiful. However, some significant progress has been made in increasing education levels and the overall marketability of the state's labor force. As a result, many areas have been able to attract industries which will, over the long haul, enhance the earning capacity of the work force.

In recent years the state has surpassed the national average in percent of growth in per capita income. Yet a definite dichotomy exists in economic conditions across the Magnolia State. Many counties, particularly those in the western half of the state, continue to suffer from consistently high levels of unemployment while other reports levels of joblessness below the national average. Urban areas have tended to be more successful in upgrading local economic conditions than have their rural counterparts. The recent advent of gaming operations in coastal and river areas has had definite and positive effects on those areas. However, other areas that continue to suffer from a lack of economic growth face an uphill battle, which may be compounded by the growing trend in the loss of manufacturing jobs to foreign markets. Officials from the Mississippi Development Authority also envision a future in high tech fields such as communications and increases in tourist related services due to gaming, natural resources, and other attractions.

In December 1998, after a year of study, the Special Task Force for Economic Development Planning presented to the 1999 State Legislature the top issues which were seen as the most important affecting the long-range competitiveness of Mississippi. In the estimation of the task force, three of the top eight issues pertained to workforce training and education. The three top issues identified are: fragmentation between funding sources and training programs, the need for a proficiency driven promotion policy for Mississippi schools for K through 12, and the shortage of quality teachers. Other important issues include local and regional planning and cooperation and information technology development. Sources supporting the above market trends include Labor Market Information prepared by the Mississippi Employment Security Commission and the final report entitled "Seizing the Future: On the Right Trace" prepared by the Special Task Force for Economic Development Planning, Mississippi Law 57-63.

2. Implications

According to the Mississippi State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee the following are the top twenty-five fastest growing occupations in Mississippi:

Occupation	Percent Growth 1996-2006	Education and Training Required
Paralegal Personnel	8.1	Associate Degree
Systems Analysts	8.0	Bachelor's Degree
Home Health Aides	7.4	Short Term On-the-Job training
Medical Assistants	6.2	HS+ On-the-job training
Physical Therapists	6.0	Bachelor's Degree
Stock Clerks, Stockroom, Warehouse	5.0	Post- secondary

Emergency Medical Technicians	4.6	Post-secondary
Teachers, Special Education	4.5	Master's Degree
Medical Records Technicians	4.5	Post-secondary
Personal and Home Care Aides	4.3	Short-term On-the-job training
Physician's Assistant	4.1	Post-secondary
Engineering, Mathematical	3.9	Master's Degree
Counter and Rental Clerks	3.9	Short-term On-the-job training
Respiratory Therapists	3.8	Associate Degree
Customer Service Representatives	3.8	HS+ On-the-job-training
Hairdressers, Cosmetologists	3.8	Post-secondary
Paving & Surfacing Equipment Operators	3.4	Short-term On-the-job training
Speech-Language Pathologists	3.2	Master's Degree
Bill & Account Collectors	3.2	HS+ On-the-job training
Precision Wood worker	3.2	Post-secondary
Funeral Directors & Morticians	3.1	Post-secondary
Dental Assistants	3.1	Post-secondary
Pressing Machine Operators	2.9	On-the-job training
Human Services Workers	2.9	Moderate-term On-the-job training
Teacher Aides, Paraprofessional	2.9	HS+ Short-term On-the-job training

These trends are closely aligned with national projections for the fastest growing occupations.

Emerging occupations may be entirely new, created by changes in technology, society, markets, or regulations. There may also be existing ones that have been

substantially modified by the same trends and are increasing in employment. For example, the services division reported the greatest number of emerging occupations. Within this division, the industry groups reporting the most emerging occupations were social services, health services, business services, and education.

Implications of these trends are:

- the existing workforce must be retrained to keep up with technological advances and industry changes,
- the education level of employees and potential employees should be post-secondary; however, a 4-year degree is not mandatory for employment,
- agricultural employment will continue to decrease,
- support services for low-income and single-parents will increase, such as transportation and child care,
- specialized skills will require a strong background in mathematics and science,
- relocation for employment purposes may be a necessity due to the rural nature of a large part of the state,
- easily accessible information and services is a must,
- funding streams for education and training should be seamless for students, and,
- training and retraining should focus on technology advancements, health care related jobs, and service related employment.

3. Customers

The Strategic Planning Task Force of the SWIB will identify and set priorities for the customer base among employers and persons seeking employment and/or retraining in the State's workforce investment system.

Based upon statistics and trends outlined above it appears that the customer base among persons seeking employment, training and/or retraining will be: employed adults seeking training or retraining, dislocated workers, post-secondary graduates entering/re-entering the job market, and Youth seeking part-time jobs. Among these will be public assistance recipients, older workers, veterans, persons with disabilities, women, and minorities.

The noninstitutional population, fourteen years of age or older, is estimated to be 2,109,720. This number includes the major categories of the customer base mentioned above. Better than three-fifths of the working age people are expected to participate in the labor force, or a projected 1,265,832 persons. It is anticipated that all working persons in the labor force will need some type of retraining to stay abreast of changes in technology related to their employment. According to comments from several employers, many employed workers will need to upgrade their skills to the level of high school equivalency in order to maintain existing employment.

Public assistance rolls in Mississippi have decreased around 70% over the past few years with the implementation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. This significant decrease has made it difficult to meet JTPA goals in this area. Trends are expected to continue in this direction, requiring exempt TANF recipients to seek work/be employed to meet projected goals. As of April 1999, only 2418 adults remaining on public assistance are not exempt from the work

requirement. For the same time period, an additional 2028 are in allowable work activities.

Even though the TANF roles are decreasing, there are an estimated 680,160 persons who live on incomes below the poverty level. Approximately 75% of these persons are expected to meet JTPA guidelines. Blacks and females, mutually exclusive, will account for a majority of the JTPA eligible population. Among the disadvantaged in the state, roughly two out of three will be from minority race groups. The disadvantaged population is not expected to shrink by any significant number in the near or immediate future.

Mississippi has approximately 227,000 persons age 16 and over who are veterans.

Significant to Vietnam Veteran unemployment is that the unemployment rate should remain significantly lower than that of the general population. It is projected that the age, discipline and maturity of the veterans is the reason for this phenomena.

Statewide, Mississippi's unemployment rate has dropped significantly. Initial projections by economists was that the rate would drop as low as 5.3% by PY 1999. The unemployment rate for May 1999 is 4.9%. The increase in job availability both directly and indirectly by the gaming industry account for less than half of the new jobs, while expansion and new industry account for the balance.

A major concern for re-employment after closure or layoff, especially in the rural areas, is the reluctance of dislocated workers to relocate for employment. This fact may be due to the large number of female heads of household and the existing support systems in their home counties. This trend is expected to continue and will be difficult to change over the short-term.

Females in the workforce do not fare as well as males, regardless of heritage. Female claimants outnumbered male claimants for UI benefits during PY 1997 in all age brackets except for those under age 20. The services, trade and apparel manufacturing were the industries responsible for the highest number of claimants due to relocations to foreign job markets. This trend is expected to continue. As females comprise the majority of this worker market, this group is projected to continue to be high in UI claims.

The total disabled population in Mississippi for FY 1998 was 286,000. Of this number 20,733 received services by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Employers seeking employees and retraining opportunities for existing employees will be the other customer base. Currently, many employers are resorting to significant recruitment for employees out-of-state as well as out-of-the country.

4. Projected Needs

Job skill requirements will be evaluated for each individual customer as he/she utilizes the technology and/or personnel at the one-stop centers. The customer's existing job skills will be identified through skill-match profiles to assess the skills needed for the job market. Several resources are available to assist customers in identifying likely employers for their existing skills, in addition to identifying additional wide-ranging skills required by today's changing workplace.

As the SWIB Strategic Planning Task Force identifies and sets priorities for customers a broad projection may be made as to the specific skills training/upgrading/enhancements required. However, it is a given that skills enhancement will be needed to adapt to the advanced technology needs of the workplace.

B. State Readiness Analysis

1. Leadership

a. State Workforce Investment Board.

- i. Members of the State Board were designated by the Governor's Appointment Secretary, who followed the guidelines set forth in the Act. To identify potential members for the Board, the Appointment Secretary consulted with general purpose organizations including the Mississippi Economic Council, the Mississippi Manufacturers Association, and Associated General Contractors. Nominations were solicited from state, regional, and local business organizations to ensure that individuals representing both small and large businesses were included on the Board, and that the appropriate mix of employers and the geographical diversity for the State was considered. Every attempt was made to select business representatives who also serve on either the State Workforce Development Council, the Private Industry Councils, or local district councils. Members of these existing council's bring invaluable experience and expertise to the State Board. Further, including these members helps to align state funded workforce activities, strengthens coordination between the groups and ensures a cohesive approach to designing a workforce investment system for the state. The directors of the key agencies that will participate as one-stop partners were appointed to ensure their input and experience from the OSIEC is included. Other members of the State Board were recommended by their peers, taking into consideration their area of expertise and the contributions they will make to the planning and implementation process.

The Lieutenant Governor, the presiding officer of the Senate, appointed two members of the Mississippi Senate. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Mississippi Legislature appointed two members from the House of Representatives.

The President of the Mississippi AFL-CIO was consulted regarding nominations of members to represent labor.

The demographics of the state were taken into consideration when appointing members and members were appointed from each region of the state. The appointment process ensured that board members include black males, white males, black females, and white females; small and large businesses; sectors of the economy including manufacturing, services, retail, banking, construction, and banking; and individuals from the Mississippi Delta, hill country, central, southwest, southeast, and gulf coast regions.

- ii. With a dynamic and diverse membership, the State Board is well equipped to provide the direction-setting leadership needed to implement Mississippi's workforce development system. The Governor mandated the functions of the State Board in Executive Order Number 795. The functions of the Board as described in the executive order include the federally mandated functions set forth in Section 111(d) of the Workforce Investment Act., as well as additional functions and responsibilities related to the state's one-stop system. These include the establishment and management of a one-stop employment and training delivery system conforming to the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act, recommending policy for implementing the Governor's

approved plan for employment and training activities and services within the state. In developing this one-stop system, the State Board will work with the Local Boards to develop a strong coordinated effort to establish the system. Through the three task forces and strategic plan described earlier, each task force set forth the framework in which the Board will operate to accomplish the state's objectives for a comprehensive workforce investment system.

- iii. The State Board will interact with the Local Workforce Investment Boards in several ways. First, the Board will provide policy direction for the Local Boards. For example, the State Board established the Local Workforce Investment Board Appointment and Certification Policy which gives guidance to local chief elected officials regarding the appointment of local boards. Other such policies will be developed by the State Board to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities relative to the Workforce Investment Act. The vision created by the State Board sets the guidelines for the Local Boards to follow in developing their local plans. The State Board will review the local plans to ensure that they are consistent with the overall vision for workforce development in the state.

Staff of the Employment Training Division are available to attend meetings of the local boards to provide technical assistance and to ensure policy coordination. Staff will report on the actions and decisions made by the local boards to the State Board as necessary. Local board members will be notified of State Board meetings and encouraged to attend.

The State Board will work in conjunction with the local boards to design broad guidelines for the delivery of workforce development programs, identify all existing delivery agencies and other resources, define appropriate roles of the various agencies to include an analysis of service providers' strengths and weaknesses, determine the best way to utilize the various agencies to deliver services to recipients, and develop a financial plan to support the delivery system that shall, at a minimum, include an accountability system.

- iv. Every effort will be made to ensure that the public is informed of Board activities and decisions regarding workforce development activities in the state. In compliance with Mississippi State Law regarding open meetings (reference Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Title 25-41-13, Open Meetings) a public notice will be included in appropriate newspapers across the state to announce the time, date and location of each Board meeting. In addition, each meeting shall be held in a location that is accessible to the general public and that is handicap accessible. Adequate seating will be provided at each meeting to allow members of the public to observe the proceedings.

Minutes shall be kept of each Board meeting (Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Title 25-41-11, completed and on file at the Employment Training Division within 30 days of each meeting. The minutes shall be open for public inspection during regular business hours at the Employment Training Division. Further, a copy of the information provided to Board members for consideration at each meeting shall also be available for inspection at the Employment Training Division. A copy of the minutes or information regarding Board activities shall be provided upon written request to the

Employment Training Division. A roster of the Board membership including the names, addresses, and area of representation of each member is also available upon request.

The State is working closely with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to ensure that assistive services and/or devices are available to provide easy access to information for individuals with disabilities. The State will include a statement in its correspondence regarding meetings or announcing the availability of information, that gives the name, address and telephone number of a contact person within the Employment Training Division who is responsible for providing accommodations. Upon request, information will be made available to individuals with special needs in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, diskette, cassette tape or other accommodations.

b. Conflict of Interest

In regard to conflict of interest, the members of the Board will comply with Mississippi State Law (reference Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Title 25-4-105) regarding conflict of interest, and Section 111(f)(1)(2) of the Workforce Investment Act.

Mississippi State Law clearly describes those activities and actions that constitute a conflict of interest. For example, the law states that no public servant shall use his position to obtain pecuniary benefit (benefit in the form of money, property, commercial interest or anything else that results in economic gain) for himself other than compensation provided for by law, or to obtain pecuniary benefit for any relative or any business with which he is associated.

The bylaws for the Board state that no member or his representative shall vote on an issue in which he or she has a direct personal or pecuniary interest. It is the responsibility of the member or his representative to notify the presiding officer at a meeting of the conflict of interest and to abstain from voting. Such abstentions are recorded in the Board minutes.

Further, each Board member is required to file a Statement of Economic Interest with the Mississippi Ethics Commission each year, which identifies their personal, financial and pecuniary interests.

Mississippi State Law (reference Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Title 25-4-105) regarding conflict of interest provisions also apply to local workforce investment board members.

c. Local Board Appointment Criteria

During its first meeting, the State Workforce Investment Board approved the *Local Workforce Investment Board Appointment and Certification Policy*. The policy provides local workforce investment area chief elected officials with the specific requirements and standards for nomination, appointment and certification of local workforce investment boards in the state. A copy of the policy is attached as Attachment C.

d. Allocation Formulas.

i. WIA funds will be allocated on the basis of the basic prescribed formula and methodology.

The funds allocated to the local areas for youth and adult activities will be allocated based on the formulas specified in Section 128(b)(2)(A)(I) and

133(b)(2)(A)(I) respectively. The two additional discretionary factors specified in 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3) will not be used.

Since the local workforce investment areas differ substantially from the Job Training Partnership Act service delivery areas, the state does not plan to use any hold harmless procedures during the first two years of the WIA. Only six of the State's 82 counties remain in the same unchanged service delivery area. Following the first two years, the state will apply the hold harmless provisions of the Act.

- ii. The Governor will allocate to the local workforce investment areas a minimum of 60 percent of the WIA Section 133 dislocated worker funds. Not more than twenty-five percent will be reserved for statewide rapid response activities, five percent for statewide administration, and 10 percent will be reserved for statewide adult, youth, and dislocated worker activities specified in the Act.

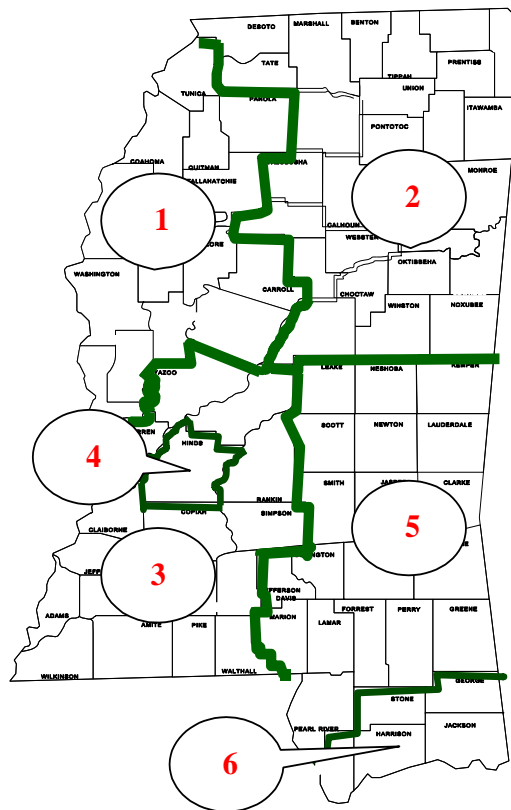
Dislocated worker funds will be allocated to the local areas using the six factors prescribed in Title I plus the number of dislocated workers. These factors are weighted as shown below.

ALLOCATION FACTOR	ASSIGNED WEIGHT
Insured Unemployment	10%
Unemployment Concentrations	25%
Plant Closing and Mass Layoff Data	5%
Declining Industries Data	10%
Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship Data	5%
Long-Term Unemployment Data	30%
Number of Dislocated Workers	15%
	100%

Additional Factor Justification: The Mississippi Employment Security Commission (MESC) generates a special printout from its active applicant new and renewal data that displays the number of applicants registered as dislocated workers. This information is an ideal addition to the elements required by WIA. A weight of 15 percent is justified because this item allows allocating funds based on the number of individuals who register with MESC as members of the target group for which these dollars are earmarked. Profiled unemployment insurance claimants are included in this data.

iii. Allocation for the first year of WIA by area (see the following map):

Funding Stream	1	2	3	4	5	6
Adult	\$ 2,375,829	\$ 2,389,822	\$ 1,734,697	\$ 711,915	\$ 1,714,506	\$ 713,637
Youth	\$ 2,795,078	\$ 2,574,220	\$ 1,887,745	\$ 777,368	\$ 1,868,759	\$ 775,036
Dislocated Worker	\$ 1,843,409	\$ 2,434,670	\$ 1,499,565	\$ 758,256	\$ 1,706,176	\$ 1,131,480
Total	\$ 7,014,316	\$ 7,398,712	\$ 5,122,007	\$ 2,247,539	\$ 5,289,441	\$ 2,620,153



Consultation has occurred in meetings and correspondence between the state WIA administrative entity and local chief elected officials and their representatives, local boards and their representatives, the State Workforce Investment Board and its task forces, and other partner state agencies. Information and presentations have been given to these groups to educate them on the probable shifts in resources and the effects of these shifts. This subject was discussed at length during the local area designation process. The State works diligently to provide information and help local elected officials understand the impact of their actions. The proposed allocation method was provided to the local elected officials and other interested parties through the

use of the official WIA Communication system. Comments and suggestions were requested.

e. State-Level Procurement

The Employment Training Division (ETD) of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) has detailed procurement procedures for both competitive and noncompetitive awards. (These procedures do not apply to the funds the State allocates by formula to the local workforce investment areas.) The ETD's Procurement Policy complies with the uniform administrative requirements established by the Office of Management and Budget in Circular A-102 revised October 7, 1994, and amended August 29, 1997. In addition, the policy incorporates the laws and regulations set forth in the State of Mississippi / Office of Purchasing and Travel's Procurement Manual providing for the implementation of Title 31, Chapter 7, Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated. The practices of the ETD of the MDA that supplement and enforce these requirements are also incorporated.

The Employment Training Division has a comprehensive procurement policy that covers procedures for procuring goods, equipment, services, and providers of WIA activities and services. The policy covers the small purchase, competitive sealed bids/proposal, competitive proposals, and noncompetitive proposals methods. All procedures are developed to avoid duplication of services, to focus on demonstrated ability of the bidder or proposer, to ensure ethical practices, and to ensure adequate documentation of the process.

The noncompetitive method has limited use. This process may be used when the award of a contract is not feasible under the other methods and one of the following circumstances applies:

- The service is available only from a single source,
- A public exigency or emergency need for the service will not permit a delay resulting from a competitive solicitation,
- Competition is deemed inadequate after solicitation of a number of sources, or
- The awarding agency authorizes noncompetitive proposals.

By approval of this plan, the ETD is requesting authorization by the awarding agency for sole source procurement under the following special circumstances:

- A contractor is able to bring its own resources or those donated by another party to the project and is, therefore, able to provide the services in a highly cost effective manner; or
- A contractor has specific qualifications for performing the services or activities which make the agent superior over others so that no substitute will suffice; or
- A contractor has the ability to consolidate or integrate services for the benefit of clients or/and for a reduction in duplicative administrative structures.

f. Youth Procurement

Youth councils must play a significant role in program and service development for youth. In accordance with the WIA regulations at § 661.340, youth council responsibilities include developing portions of the local plan related to eligible youth and making recommendations to the workforce investment board regarding service providers.

In the local plan each area will develop criteria to identify effective and ineffective youth activities and providers. Such criteria should include the following:

- Developing relationships between youth and adult role models;
- Involving family members;
- Building youth responsibility;
- Developing youth citizenship and leadership skills;
- Placing high expectations on youth and staff;
- Instilling self confidence;
- Providing appropriate services based on age and needs;
- Demonstrating involvement of the business community;
- Providing accommodations for special needs;
- Demonstrating prior successes in providing employment and training services to youth;
- Preparing youth for educational and employment success;
- Demonstrating the connection between work and learning; and
- Providing comprehensive guidance and counseling.

In addition, the local boards must develop and follow local procurement procedures. Procurement procedures must be included in the local plans. Any youth grant(s) awarded by the Governor as part of the statewide workforce investment activities will consider the above criteria and will follow state procurement policies and requirements as described in paragraph e.

g. Additional Youth Eligibility

The state has not identified the sixth youth eligibility criterion at this time. Until the state determines a statewide criterion is necessary, each local Board shall make the decision about youth who need additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment

h. State Policies and Requirements (Sec.112(b)(2).)

i. Statewide Workforce Investment System

The goal of Mississippi's Workforce Investment System is to provide easy access to quality services for all customers. To achieve this goal, co-location of service providers and the integration of services to the fullest extent possible are the priorities of this system. Every element of the Mississippi Workforce Investment System shall be designed to enable our customers, both job seekers and employers, to compete successfully and achieve economic security. The comprehensive system shall break down barriers, respond to the needs of our customers, and integrate services from the State's major

workforce development programs into a seamless package for the customer. Major policies developed to direct and support the design and implementation of the system are described in the following paragraphs.

Selection of One-Stop Operator. Local workforce investment boards, with the approval of local elected officials, have the responsibility for selecting the one-stop operators. In selecting the operators, the local workforce investment boards shall demonstrate a good faith effort to view the one-stop system holistically and to respect the partner agencies. The selection process must be impartial. According to Section 121(d)(2)(A), local workforce investment boards have two options for designating one-stop operators. The one-stop operator may be procured through a competitive process which reflects applicable state and local law, regulations, and OMB circulars regarding competitive procurement OR the one-stop operator may be selected in accordance with an agreement reached between the local workforce investment board and a consortium of entities that, at a minimum, includes three or more of the one-stop partners. Failure to adhere to these provisions violates the Act. Violations may result in the Governor's decertifying the local workforce investment board, disapproving the local plan, selecting an alternate entity to administer the program for the local area, merging the local area into one or more other local areas, or making other changes as the Governor or Secretary determines necessary. Such sanctions may be appealed to the Secretary and shall not become effective until the time for appeal has expired or the Secretary has issued a decision.

The Act provides provision for local boards and elected officials to certify one-stop operators which existed prior to the implementation of the Act. Since the State of Mississippi has not implemented the one-stop system, this provision is not applicable.

Subrecipient Agreements. Following the selection of the one-stop operator, the fiscal agent for the local area will initiate appropriate financial and subrecipient documents with the one-stop operator. The subrecipient document will incorporate Mississippi's One-Stop Certification Standards.

Impasse Procedure. The operation of the one-stop delivery system will be negotiated between the local workforce investment board, with the approval of the local elected officials, and the one-stop partners. The agreement(s) reached by the local board and the partners will be reflected in a memorandum of understanding. A single memorandum of understanding between the board and all partners may be developed, or separate agreements between the board and each partner may be established. The memorandum(s) of understanding will include the services to be provided through the one-stop delivery system, how the costs of services and the operating costs of the system will be funded, methods for referral of individuals between the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners for appropriate services or activities, duration of the agreement, and procedures for amending the agreement. The parties may include additional provisions which are consistent with the Act and Mississippi's Workforce Investment Plan. All parties to the agreement(s) must sign the agreement.

The state will provide technical assistance to local workforce investment boards, fiscal agents and local elected officials to facilitate the reaching of

memorandums of understanding with partner agencies for the smooth initiation and operation of the one-stop delivery system. However, if substantive impasses remain between local workforce investment boards and partner agencies after local good-faith efforts have been made for resolution, local boards are to file a report with the Governor while the partner is to report the impasse to the appropriate state administering entity. The reports are to identify unresolved issues and describe efforts to reach agreement. The Governor or his designee will work with the relevant state agency to resolve the impasse. If necessary, the state may seek assistance from the Secretary of Labor and/or federal cognizant agency for the partner program. However, if unresolved issues remain and prevent the execution of a memorandum of agreement between the local board and the mandatory partner, the state will notify the Secretary of Labor and the appropriate federal cognizant agency of failure to execute the agreement. In accordance with regulatory provisions, partners who fail to execute an agreement with the local board may not be permitted to serve on the local board and local areas with boards that fail to execute all agreements will not be eligible for state incentive grants awarded based on local coordination of activities.

Criteria for Boards to Run Inhouse Programs. A local workforce investment board may not directly provide core services, or intensive services, or be designated or certified as a one-stop operator unless agreed to by the chief elected official and the Governor. A local board is prohibited from providing training services unless the Governor grants a waiver in accordance with the Act. The prohibition also applies to staff of local boards. Local boards seeking such waivers shall provide the Governor with the information required in Section 117(f). Any waiver granted a local board shall apply for a maximum of one year and may be renewed for a maximum of one more additional year.

OJT and Customized Training Performance Information. A critical feature of the one-stop service delivery system is accountability. The state will establish a consumer report system which, at a minimum, compares actual performance against the adult performance measures for eligible training providers, one-stop centers, and workforce areas. Each workforce area is required to track performance of additional service providers, including on-the-job training and customized training brokers, and disseminate, through the one-stop system, information comparable to the consumer report. The one-stop operator or broker will evaluate the performance of all on-the-job training and customized training contracts against the local area's adult performance standards and consider demonstrated effectiveness prior to entering into additional contracts with the employer.

Reallocation Policy. The Mississippi Workforce Investment System will be accomplished through a cohesive public/private collaboration with strong local input built on the effective and efficient interaction of partners and the employers of the state's workforce. The state will analyze actual expenditures and obligations of adult, dislocated worker, and youth funds by each workforce area following the end of each program year. The Governor, upon the recommendation of the State Workforce Investment Board, may initiate a reallocation if a workforce area has an unobligated balance in any of the three

fund allocations that exceeds 20% of such allocation for the program year prior to the year in which the determination is made. In making any reallocation, the Governor will adhere to Section 128(c).

Transfer of Funds. Local boards may submit a request to the Governor to transfer not more than 20% of a program year allocation for adult employment and training activities, and up to 20% of a program year allocation for dislocated worker employment and training activities between the two programs. The request will describe how the transfer will be consistent with the goals of the Mississippi Workforce Investment System. No transfer may be made to or from the youth programs.

Priority of Service. Section 134(d)(4)(E) stipulates that if funds allocated for adult employment and training activities are limited, priority in the provision of intensive and training services will be given to public assistance recipients and other low-income adults. TANF is the only form of public assistance available in Mississippi. Currently, TANF funds are sufficient to support intensive and training activities for TANF recipients. However, approximately 20% of Mississippi adults are considered to be in poverty. Therefore, the Mississippi Workforce Investment System will target outreach activities to such adults, including working adults whose employment does not allow for self-sufficiency, food stamp recipients, homeless individuals, and individuals with a disability whose own income does not exceed the poverty level or 70% of the lower living standard. The one-stop service delivery system will identify low-income adults who access core services and determine if intensive or training services will assist the individual in obtaining self-sufficiency. If such determination is made, the one-stop operator will give priority to such adults in the provision of intensive and training services. Local boards will describe how this priority provision will be implemented. Wagner-Peyser activities conducted through the Mississippi Workforce Investment System will continue the veteran's preference requirements.

Other Targeted Groups. In addition to the priority of service policy, the Mississippi Workforce Investment System will conduct outreach efforts to encourage access of one-stop services by displaced homemakers, older workers, and others with multiple barriers to employment and training including offenders and persons within the labor force who are not proficient in English. Local boards will be encouraged to consider establishing specialty sites for serving such individuals, hiring or training appropriate staff to provide services to individuals with special needs, securing the services of volunteers in the community, or other appropriate strategies to meet specialized needs. Additionally, local boards will develop relationships with appropriate social service agencies for the provision of interpreters on an as needed basis.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Training services will be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). The ITA will be established by a One-Stop center operator on behalf of an eligible individual. The LWIBs, in conjunction with State Policy will establish policy guidance on conditions for the receipt of ITAs. At a minimum these conditions must include how individuals will receive core and intensive services prior to the

issuance of an ITA; the documentation in the individual employment plan of the need for training; a process for documenting how other sources were sought to help pay for training; how the use of ITAs will be limited to demand occupations that are appropriate for the individual; a process for tracking attendance, grades, and completion of the training; a follow-up process; limitations on ITAs; payment methods for ITAs; and internal procedures for the issuance of ITAs that include the application process, disbursement procedures, mechanism for tracking expenditures, and a refund policy. Although the ITA system will provide customer choice, customers may only apply the ITA to training programs included on the eligible provider list. The case manager and the customer will mutually agree on the selected training occupation as part of the individual employment plan. During the development of the individual employment plan, the case manager will use labor market information supplemented by employer contacts to determine occupations in demand which are of interest to the customer. The customer will not have the burden of demonstrating that a particular training leads to gainful employment. However, the case manager will be receptive to any information provided by the customer.

ii. Consultation

With no Mississippi city having a population of 500,000 or more, local county boards of supervisors best represent local government. Since the enactment of the Workforce Investment Act, the Employment Training Division, Mississippi Development Authority has consulted with the Mississippi Association of Supervisors and the Planning and Development Districts. Prior to the 1999 legislative session, county boards of supervisors had no legislative authority to receive and administer employment and training funds. The Mississippi Association of Supervisors was instrumental in working with the state legislature during the 1999 session to amend the appropriate section of the state code and, thus, allow for the specific local implementation of WIA. Through several mediums, the Mississippi Association of Supervisors is facilitating consultation between the state and county boards of supervisors. Educational workshops, mailings to every county supervisor, articles in the monthly magazine, and one-on-one meetings have been used to educate and consult with county elected officials. As interlocal agreements or cooperative service agreements are formed, chief elected officials and/or their designated fiscal agents will be provided opportunities for policy input. Additionally, as local workforce boards are appointed, briefings on draft policies will be provided and comments solicited.

iii. Obstacles

The state faces several challenges in implementing the Workforce Investment Act. As earlier described, the State Workforce Education Act establishes a governance structure around community college districts. State vocational and workforce training dollars are distributed to the community colleges. Federal Workforce Investment Act funds are not sufficient to support a workforce area for each community college district. Additionally, the WIA gives local elected officials the responsibility for appointing local workforce boards in contrast to state legislation that authorizes community college trustees such responsibility.

Due to the rural nature of Mississippi, 62 of the 82 counties have been served by a "balance of state" service delivery area with the remaining 20 counties served by 4 service delivery areas. The two-year release of the hold-harmless allocation provision will result in the majority of WIA dollars being allocated to rural areas which have much higher unemployment rates than their urban counterparts. Given the reduction in allowed administrative funds and the smaller allocation, some workforce areas may not receive sufficient dollars to effectively administer a program as complex as WIA.

Following an established policy adopted at the initial Board meeting of the State Workforce Investment Board, the Governor initially designated four geographic areas of the state as the proposed workforce area. After a public comment period, the State Workforce Investment Board reviewed the comments received and recommended the Governor revise the proposed boundaries to include five geographic areas. Maps labeled Attachment A and B are attached which depict these boundaries respectively. These areas were designated by the Governor as the local workforce areas. Hinds County became a sixth workforce area when Program Year 1998 performance resulted in earning the county temporary designation. All multi-county workforce areas have entered into agreements to fulfill the local elected official responsibilities.

Although Mississippi has not implemented a local one-stop system, this is not seen as a disadvantage. Instead, the state has the advantage of using one-stop implementation dollars to build the one-stop system required by the Workforce Investment Act. Several of the SDA Administrative Entities, community colleges, and planning and development districts have experienced professionals who are anxious to implement the one-stop system in Mississippi. This will foster a smooth transition from JTPA to WIA. The state may use one-stop grant funds together with 2% of JTPA dollars to provide planning grants to fiscal agents identified in interlocal/cooperative service agreements. Similarly, the state will be able to align WIA planning and implementation with the School-to-Work grant which is now being implemented.

During the design of the one-stop service delivery system, the state will address coordination with partners on equal opportunity and nondiscrimination matters. The state will provide guidance and technical assistance as well as monitor adherence to equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements. In the development of the Methods of Administration in compliance with the US Directorate of Civil Rights, the state will require each workforce investment area to designate an equal opportunity officer. Each area will develop a grievance procedure for both equal opportunity and nondiscrimination complaints. Each one-stop service center will display/or provide a description of the claims process including the identification of the EO officer.

2. Services

a. Integrated Service Delivery System

After a victory with State legislation (Workforce Education Act of 1994) to develop a career center system through the community college network and two unsuccessful funding attempts for federal support, a coalition of four agencies at the state level (Mississippi Development Authority, Community College Board, Employment Security Commission and Department of Education) was successful in receiving a planning grant for one-stop development in January 1996. This planning grant allowed these agencies and other partners to organize. After consultation and discussion the planning group recommended to the Governor the establishment of an official council whose task was to develop a viable one-stop system. Through Executive Order No. 769 Governor Kirk Fordice established the One-Stop Interagency Executive Council (OSIEC) on August 6, 1996. Its purpose was to organize workforce programs to ensure maximum cooperation among state agencies, reduce bureaucratic requirements, eliminate duplication and conflict, make the best use of planning and coordination efforts and eliminate any identified wasteful practices. These efforts were to be carried out by the development of a one-stop system.

After organization activities were completed, the OSIEC adopted a vision, mission statement and limited definitions. The 15 community college districts were selected as the geographic boundaries of the one-stop system. Broad principles governing the one-stop system and the presumed roles and levels of commitment of each of the partners were established.

The planning grant was extended and expanded to become an implementation grant. Subgrants were executed and the OSIEC proceeded with the development of local planning information and data. Local level governance was established and local meetings began to provide information and training. A subgrant was also executed for the upgrading of the electronic capability of the Mississippi Employment Security Commission. The upgrading will allow interface with partner agencies through the State electronic data backbone system.

The passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 led the OSIEC to hold all plans until the State Workforce Board (SWIB) was designated. Upon establishing a new SWIB, the OSIEC was disbanded and its duties transferred to the SWIB. Many of the OSIEC members and/or agency representatives have been appointed to the State Workforce Investment Board. These established relationships strengthen the opportunity for the previous work completed through the OSIEC to guide the initial conversations of the SWIB in relation to one-stop system development.

As the result of the initial efforts of these agencies and the OSIEC, a coordination of service-related efforts began which strengthened the one-stop concept. The out-stationing of Employment Service staff in designated community college career centers and the development of resource rooms in selected employment service offices to enhance customer access to information and services are examples. Most notable is the understanding gained of partner agency's services, funding, priorities, personalities and commitments. This understanding will facilitate the development of a one-stop system consistent with WIA guidelines.

b. Collaboration

There is an extended history of collaboration among and between programs funded under WIA Title I and the Wagner-Peyser Act. Through the existing system of JTPA and Wagner-Peyser services, state plans are shared, comments provided, and sign off documented for all Wagner-Peyser plans. Additionally, there are existing contractual arrangements using JTPA funds for many service-related activities, i.e. assessment, placement, profiling, reporting, etc. These relationships allow access and the provision of a stronger state-wide network of needed employment and training services. Additionally, the leadership from both organizations have been instrumental in advocating a one-stop network through the Mississippi Workforce Education Act, the OSIEC, and now the SWIB. Sharing and commenting on state plans among and between the required and optional partners also exists. Through pre-planning meetings, public hearings, written comment, and formal and informal discussions, state plans are coordinated through the employment and training network.

All partners of the employment and training community have organized a professional organization for training and development. This organization, the Mississippi Workforce Development Association, is an affiliate of the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA). The state association, along with the Mississippi Development Authority, sponsored four statewide forums to outline the WIA legislation and its impact on the employment and training service arena. Future sessions are planned to give wide exposure and obtain input regarding Mississippi's Workforce Investment Plan.

The partner agencies of the one-stop system have formed a consortium and petitioned all six local workforce area boards to be the one-stop operator. Additionally all partner agencies are meeting as a group to develop a state-level memorandum of agreement which addresses the electronic information system, confidentiality, sharing of customer data, definitions of common terms, nonmandatory partners/services, evaluation, the strategic plan, marketing, cost allocation, mediation, and capacity building. This Agreement is in the final stages of negotiation.

The roles of the state partner agencies in the collaboration process is to ensure that the programs which they administer are appropriately represented in the state's one-stop service delivery system. The Mississippi Employment Security Commission is the state grant recipient for veterans programs, Wagner-Peyser, NAFTA/TAA, and unemployment insurance. The Mississippi Community and Junior College Board is the state grantee for Adult Education and Literacy under WIA Title II. The Mississippi Department for Rehabilitation Services is the state grantee for the Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. The Mississippi Department of Human Services administers the state's Senior Community Service Employment Program under Title V of the Older Americans Act and the Community Services Block Grant. The Mississippi State Department of Education is the state grantee for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act. Each of these partner agencies will negotiate a memorandum of understanding with each local workforce investment board to fulfill Section 121.

3. System Infrastructure

a. Local Workforce Investment Areas.

i. Designated Local Workforce Investment Areas

The Governor has designated six workforce areas as illustrated on the attached map (Attachment B). No unit of government in Mississippi qualifies for automatic designation. Of the five service delivery areas, two service delivery areas, Gulf Coast and Hinds County, received temporary designation according to Section 116(a)(2). The Mississippi SDA or "balance of state counties" was absorbed into four smaller areas. The counties of Mississippi are designated into the following six areas:

Area One (Delta) - New Designation

Bolivar	Issaquena	Sunflower
Carroll	Leflore	Tallahatchie
Coahoma	Panola	Tunica
Holmes	Quitman	Washington
Humphreys	Sharkey	

Area Two (Mississippi Partnership) - New Designation

Alcorn	Itawamba	Pontotoc
Attala	Lafayette	Prentiss
Benton	Lee	Tate
Calhoun	Lowndes	Tippah
Chickasaw	Marshall	Tishomingo
Choctaw	Monroe	Union
Clay	Montgomery	Webster
DeSoto	Noxubee	Winston
Grenada	Oktibbeha	Yalobusha

Area 3 (Southcentral Mississippi Works) - New Designation

Adams	Lawrence	Simpson
Amite	Lincoln	Walthall
Claiborne	Madison	Warren
Copiah	Pike	Wilkinson
Franklin	Rankin	Yazoo
Jefferson		

Area 4 (Hinds County) - Temporary Designation

Hinds

Area 5 (Twin Districts) - New Designation

Clarke	Kemper	Pearl River
Covington	Lamar	Perry
Forrest	Lauderdale	Scott
Greene	Leake	Smith
Jasper	Marion	Wayne
Jefferson Davis	Neshoba	
Jones	Newton	

Area 6 (Gulf Coast) - Temporary Designation

George	Harrison	Stone
Hancock	Jackson	

To compare workforce areas with previously designated JTPA service delivery areas, compare the maps given in Attachments A and B.

ii. Designation Process

Since the receipt of the One-Stop Planning Grant in 1996, much time and effort has been devoted to studying possible designation of one-stop areas. This effort was complicated by the differences in governance structures required by the Mississippi Workforce Education Act and JTPA.

Additionally, in contrast with both the Mississippi Workforce Education Act and JTPA, planning and development districts are based on 10 areas established by Executive Order. Planning and development districts are germane to the discussion of employment and training issues for these agencies provide much needed services to Mississippi's small, rural counties and are relied upon by county boards of supervisors for planning and grant writing assistance. With the enactment of the Workforce Investment Act and the submission of white papers by various stakeholders, representatives of the community college system, employment service, and county supervisors began serious discussions to resolve the differences among the groups. As a result, a compromise position was presented to the Governor.

At its first meeting, the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) adopted a policy to govern the designation process. The policy stipulates that the SWIB will provide the Governor with a recommended designation of workforce areas and the rationale for such. The policy further stipulates that the Governor will provide the SWIB's recommended designation to each county board of supervisors and seek comments over a 30-day period. Additionally, the Governor will issue a public notice of the recommended designation. Comments resulting from the consultation process will be considered by the SWIB prior to making a final recommendation to the Governor. After considering recommendations from the SWIB and comments from local elected officials, the Governor will issue the designation of workforce areas and provide guidance to local elected officials in the completion of interlocal/cooperative service agreements. The adopted policy also includes an appeals procedure.

Following the adoption of the designation policy, the SWIB considered the compromised recommendation that was presented by a community college president and the Assistant Executive Director of the Mississippi Association

of Supervisors. The compromise recommendation was based on three overarching principals: retain the integrity of the current service delivery areas, retain labor market areas, and retain community college districts where possible. After extensive discussions, the SWIB approved a slight amendment to the presented recommendation. The amendment was made to incorporate one planning and development district completely within a workforce area. Based on the recommendations of the SWIB, the Governor forwarded letters to each county supervisor providing the recommended designation of workforce areas, outlining the significance of the issue, and asking for comments. The Employment Training Division forwarded additional information to the supervisors that included a description of the roles of county boards of supervisors in the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. Additionally, a public notice was placed in the state's major daily newspapers and a separate notice was mailed to appropriate state agencies, community colleges, service delivery areas, planning and development districts, community action agencies, labor organizations, and other entities.

Comments resulting from this consultation process were considered by the SWIB at its June 22 meeting. Fifty-nine written comments were received as a result of the proposed designation:

- Twenty-eight from Boards of Supervisors stating their concurrence with the proposed areas;
- One from an SDA requesting temporary designation through the grandfathering option;
- One from another SDA indicating their belief they are eligible for temporary designation;
- Seven reconfiguration recommendations;
- One county requesting movement from one geographic area to another;
- Twelve Boards of Supervisors opposing the dilution of resources from the Delta.

After extensive discussion and consideration, the SWIB passed a revised geographic structure that created five workforce areas and altered the boundaries of the proposed counties in the northern part of the state indicate the boundary shifts. The Governor accepted these recommendations from the SWIB. Hinds County became a sixth workforce area after PY 98 performance qualified the county for temporary designation.

iii. Appeals Process

The designation policy adopted by the SWIB includes an appeals process. A unit of government (including a combination of such units) that requests but is not granted designation as a local area under automatic or temporary and subsequent designation may submit an appeal to the SWIB. The appeal must be filed in writing within ten days of receipt of notification of final workforce investment area designation. Such request is to be mailed by certified mail with a return receipt request to the SWIB, c/o Employment Training Division, Mississippi Development Authority, Post Office Box 24568, Jackson,

Mississippi. A request for an appeal should be accompanied by a copy of the request for designation and specifically state the procedural rights or requirements of the WIA not accorded the appellant.

A hearing before the SWIB will take place within 30 days from the date the appeal is filed in writing. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with established procedures and a decision rendered within 60 days from the date the appeal is filed.

- b. Regional Planning
 - i. The State does not plan to have any intrastate or interstate regional planning.
 - ii. This section is not applicable to Mississippi.
 - iii. This section is not applicable to Mississippi.
- c. Selection of Service Providers for Individual Training Accounts.
 - i. Eligibility Policies and Procedures

The State Workforce Investment Board Chair appointed a Training-Related Policies Task Force to develop the Eligible provider Certification Policy and the Individual Training Accounts Policy. The Eligible Training Provider Policy addresses the determination of initial eligibility of local level training providers, using performance information to determine continuing eligibility (including a grievance procedure for providers denied eligibility), and the agency responsible for carrying out these activities. The Eligible Training Provider Policy is included as Attachment D.

The Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) Policy describes the minimum procedures the local boards must develop for the issuance of ITAs. The ITA Policy is included as Attachment E.
 - ii. Local Recommendation Process

The Training-Related Task Force is charged with the responsibility of recommending state policy on training providers, the consumer report card, and individual training accounts. At its first meeting on September 28, 1999, the Training-Related Task Force established an ad hoc workgroup to develop draft policies relative to the Eligible Training Provider System, the Consumer Report Card, and the Individual Training Account System. The Ad Hoc Workgroup directed the Employment Training Division staff to draft the Eligible Training Provider policy based on workgroup discussions. A copy of the draft policy and application procedures was forwarded to each local workforce investment board and the public, including providers of training services, representatives of business and labor organizations to solicit their input in the process. Comments, recommendations and other feedback received from this solicitation were considered in developing the final policy and application procedures.
 - iii. Provider List Maintenance

The State has developed an Eligible Training Provider Certification Policy which includes standard application procedures to ensure that consistent data is gathered from each training provider. Approved training providers will be included on the State Eligible Providers list. The list will include a description of the programs through which the providers may offer training services, cost information and available performance information related to

the program. The State list will be disseminated to each One-Stop center in the State.

The State is working closely with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to ensure that assistive services and/or devices are available to provide easy access to information for individuals with disabilities. The State will include a statement on the eligible training provider listing announcing the availability of information that gives the name, address and telephone number of a contact person within the Employment Training Division who is responsible for providing accommodations. Upon request, the listing will be made available to individuals with special needs in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, diskette, cassette tape or other accommodations.

iv. One-Stop Center Performance Information

Providers of training services will provide information on performance during the initial eligibility application process that will include at a minimum: completion rates, entered employment rate, training-related employment rate and average hourly wage at placement. The performance information will be available at each One-Stop center. If the required performance information is not available or not verifiable, a provider may be required to submit an electronic record which includes the following: participant name, social security number and date completed or left training for match against the Unemployment Insurance Wage Record.

v. Current Capacity

The Training-Related Policies Task Force shall determine the most efficient method for providing the statewide list of training providers and their performance information to customers. The method shall allow for easy access by both job seekers and employers. The distribution may include both the electronic network and hard copies in resource rooms and one-stop centers.

vi. Removal

Removal of a training provider from the list of eligible training providers may occur under the following conditions:

- The training provider does not meet the minimum performance levels established by the LWIB.
- The provider is determined to have intentionally supplied inaccurate information.
- The provider has violated any provisions of Title I of WIA or the regulations.

Providers whose eligibility is terminated for intentionally supplying inaccurate information or violating any provision of Title I of WIA or the regulations are liable to repay all adult and dislocated worker training funds received during the period of noncompliance. A provider of training services whose eligibility is rejected or who is removed from the list of eligibles can appeal that determination through either an appeal to the Local Workforce Investment Board or to the State. The appeal process will be provided in writing to the

training provider at the time of the rejection of eligibility or removal from the list.

➤ Local Appeals

➤ Each LWIB shall provide an opportunity for a hearing, with a final written decision on the appeal to be provided within 45 days of receipt of the request for appeal. If no timely decision is rendered by the LWIB, the appellant may within 10 days from the date on which the appellant should have received a decision, appeal to the State.

➤ State Level Appeals

➤ The State will provide an opportunity for a hearing within 30 days from the request for appeal. A written decision will be provided within 45 days of receipt of the request for appeal.

d. State's Current Capacity to Deliver High Quality Employment Statistics Information

Mississippi currently produces high quality employment statistics information for its customers, both job seekers and employers. The delivery, format, and marketing of this information has been a disadvantage and concern. In the past, most of the information has not been readily accessible to the customers in an user-friendly format. The vast majority of the data has been disseminated via published reports. Some of the data was available on diskette, if requested by the user, with other data available via kiosks and direct terminal access at the local offices from a central office mainframe computer.

Mississippi provides employment and wage data based on the Federal-State cooperative program, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). This data on employment sectors, major occupational divisions, wages, and employment and job openings by occupation is available for downloading via the website of the MS Employment Security Commission. The information is utilized in the state's career information system, presenting state specific job outlook and wages for occupations. The OES is also one of the major sources of data presented in the state's Occupational Information System (OIS). This system provides data on labor demand and job openings projections and labor supply from ES Job Bank, vocational education, and JTPA sources. The OIS is available to customers via the Website and on CD-ROM upon request.

Job seekers currently have access to the state's career information system, Mississippi ChoicesTM, in the local employment service offices. The system has a special feature requiring minimal assistance for these clients to explore up-to-date information on occupations, education and training programs, and financial aid. This system also provides an on-line career area interest inventory, work history profiler, a module for identifying transferable work content skills, and a personal planner. This system is updated and enhanced annually and includes state specific employment outlook and wage data. The system is also used by students in all middle/junior high schools, high schools, and community colleges, as well as other state agencies assisting clients with career decision-making.

Other sources of employment statistics, available to customers include the following:

<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>FORMAT</u>
<i>Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)</i>	Printed report, diskette, or direct telephone inquiry.
Current Labor Force Data for the state, all counties, all MSA's, BLS designed Labor Market Areas.	
<i>Monthly Survey of Employment by Industry Group</i>	Printed report, diskette, or direct telephone inquiry.
Estimation for place of work employment by industry for each county.	
<i>ES 202 Report</i>	Printed publications or direct telephone inquiry.
Quarterly report of employment and wages for public and private sector employers covered under the provisions of Unemployment Insurance Law. Additional annual reports are generated regarding business "births and deaths."	
<i>Current Employment Statistics Newsletter</i>	Printed format/wide distribution
Monthly newsletter providing compiled information from the monthly employment estimates.	
<i>Monthly Employment Estimates</i>	Printed reports
Current employment statistics for various industry groups for the state and the Jackson MSA.	

e. **Work Test and Feedback Requirements**

A "work test" is required for most claimants before they can receive unemployment insurance benefits. If the claimant refuses employment, the claimant may lose benefits. Claimants will be fully registered for work and will be placed in the active file. The claimant's skills, knowledge, and occupational qualification will be reflected in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) classification. The staff of the local job service offices will provide full employment services such as placement, counseling, job search skills training, testing, and other appropriate services to all claimants. Identification of intrastate claimants has been automated from the Unemployment Insurance files. Referral and placement results are reported to Unemployment Insurance through the automated data system. Identification and reporting of services on interstate claimants is performed on a day-to-day basis using a manual reporting system.

f. Eligibility Review Program (Wagner-Peyser Act)

The link between the Unemployment Insurance and the Employment system is a valuable means of ensuring the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance system. The Employment Service fulfills its responsibilities in connection with the Eligibility Review Program making the following information and services available:

- Aggressively seeking access to the majority of the job opportunities in the labor market so that in the normal course of operation, the maximum number of applicants (including claimants) are selected for referral to the available job openings.
- Reporting to UI staff all available information pertinent to determining the eligibility of individual claimants for benefits. This information would include such things as work training, refusal to respond to call-in for jobs, and refusal to apply for or accept work on a referral.
- Making available labor market information and information relating to services available to claimants such as counseling, testing, training opportunities, and the array of services through profiling.

C. Assessment of Strengths and Improvement Opportunities

1. Alignment with Vision

The Mississippi vision for workforce development is a competitive, robust, fully employed workforce that adds value to existing employers, and to potential employers competing to come to Mississippi and that improves the quality of life for all Mississippians. This vision will be accomplished through the Mississippi Workforce Investment System, a cohesive public/private collaboration with strong local input built on the effective and efficient interaction of Workforce Investment System Partners and the employers of the state's workforce.

Major changes in the delivery of Mississippi's employment and training services will be required to fulfill this vision. Although the state has received a one-stop implementation grant, the rollout of the one-stop delivery system has been delayed for consistency with WIA guidelines. However, agencies administering employment and training services have a long history in working together in the delivery of services primarily through formal financial agreements. Examples of multiple-agency supported initiatives abound. Key strengths of the current system and weaknesses to be addressed are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Since its appointment in February 1999, the State Workforce Investment Board has exhibited strong leadership in developing a strategic plan and policies needed to implement the Workforce Investment Act. Private businessmen serving on the board have strong influence in state economic development and private sector led initiatives. State agency executive directors serving on the state board have assigned key staff to work in designing the necessary agreements at both the state and local levels to implement the one-stop service delivery system consistent with the strategic plan. These key staff have attended numerous national, regional, and state sponsored capacity developing meetings and are working together as a team to enable the agencies to respond individually and collectively in implementing the Act. Although new state executive and legislative leadership transitioned in January 2000, key

decisions made prior to that date are being implemented to ensure full compliance with WIA to meet legislatively enacted deadlines.

As state and local leaders move collaboratively to establish the one-stop delivery system, having the ability to use the one-stop grant funds to rollout the system as described in the legislation is seen as an advantage. The majority of the one-stop grant funds will be used to establish the electronic infrastructure and networks in the centers as one-stop decisions are made by local workforce boards. Section IV.C.2. describes the progress of the state in expanding the internet backbone, establishing local area networks, and designing a state one-stop information management system. The JTPA participant management information system is based on a client-server structure that must be quickly modified to capture WIA registrant information on a temporary basis. Automated systems for administering the eligible provider list and consumer reports are scheduled for release in December 2000. Until then, temporary measures for managing these information systems will be established.

The state's delay in implementing the one-stop delivery system has both advantages and disadvantages. We have researched and studied the best practices in the operation of one-stop systems across the nation. Additionally, the technology supporting the one-stop operating system has matured which allows the state to purchase very customer-friendly software at relatively low costs.

However, the state partners will now need to establish over a very short time new processes for collectively serving customers, provide staff training, and develop new decision-making processes. Additionally, any relocation and/or renovation of offices must occur.

Key decisions affecting several state and local agencies will be considered by new chief elected official and local workforce investment boards. Unlike the service delivery of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the state will not implement WIA using a balance-of-state area. Of the state's 82 counties, 76 counties are in workforce areas that have different boundaries than did JTPA service delivery areas. Only one of the six workforce areas is a single government jurisdiction. The remaining five areas are multi-county, ranging from five counties in one to 27 in another. Consistent with state law, these counties entered into formal, legal interlocal or cooperative service agreements to fulfill the counties' responsibilities. Therefore, new governing boards are quickly learning the complex WIA requirements. Likewise, new local workforce investment boards are being formed, organized, and assisted in making policies and negotiating agreements with partner agencies. Between April and July 2000, selected one-stop operators will develop and submit one-stop applications to the local boards. The local boards will have the responsibility of certifying, conditionally certifying, or disapproving one-stop center applications pending a peer review process. Therefore, the volume of critical work to be accomplished in a short time span is a challenge.

The state's transition to WIA is occurring at the same time when state and local policy makers have identified workforce training as one of the most critical needs to economic success. Three separate bills were filed during this year's legislative session to create a Department of Labor that would consolidate state and federally funded employment and training programs. All proposed bills failed at or prior to floor vote. Prior to the 2001 legislative session, consolidation will be debated.

2. Moving Toward the Vision

The state has established several priorities in transitioning to WIA. The Mississippi Development Authority, the WIA grantee, will provide the leadership for policy development and will facilitate both state and local agreements to enable the development of the one-stop service delivery system. Extensive consultation relative to the development of key policies is a priority. Task force meetings, informational sessions, local presentations, and mass mailings are activities to generate widespread involvement in policy development.

Capacity building efforts targeted to increasing knowledge of local boards and staff, exploring terms for memorandums of understanding, fulfilling minimum one-stop certification requirements, implementing the eligible provider list and ITA systems, developing comprehensive youth programs, and registering customers are planned prior to July 1. Capacity building activities to assist staff in the use of continuous improvement efforts will be a priority following the initial certification of one-stop centers. Following the installation and design of the one-stop operating systems, registrant systems, and other information systems; training of both state and local staff will be scheduled. Capacity building activities are planned and recommended by a combination of local and state interests. Outside trainers or facilitators, selected primarily through a competitive solicitation, is the preferred method of delivery. Developing the state's WIA information and one-stop operating systems is another priority. See section IV.C.2. for a description of these efforts.

IV. Strategies for Improvement:

A. Leadership

To move from vision to achievement of goals, the State will ensure that all elements of the system at both the state and local levels are aligned with the strategic plan developed by the State Workforce Investment Board. The Mississippi Development Authority will take a leadership role to facilitate the reaching of state and local agreements to develop policies that will enable the local level to implement the one-stop system. These efforts are described in the following paragraphs.

1. Collaboration Improvement

Three task forces of the State Workforce Investment Board met over a six-month period to develop major policies for the transition to the one-stop service delivery system. The Strategic Planning Task Force developed the vision, values and guiding principles, five-year goals and measures, and core strategies. These are stated in section II. of this plan.

The One-Stop Task Force recommended two major state initiatives to guide the development of the one-stop service delivery system. The first recommendation calls for the five state partner agencies to initiate a memorandum of understanding that addresses required partners and services, definitions of common terms, confidentiality and sharing of customer data, strategic planning, marketing, electronic information, cost allocation, capacity building, mediation, and evaluation. Secondly, the task force recommended the adoption of a one-stop certification policy that incorporates all legislative and regulatory requirements governing the one-stop service delivery system. Additionally, the State Workforce Investment Board requested staff to research best practices and develop a technical assistance guide which would be widely disseminated to the required partners and other interested parties.

The State Workforce Investment Board has adopted an inclusive policy development and consultation process. Full discussions of policy issues occur in open meetings that are well advertised. Policy drafts are widely circulated to all affected agencies, local elected officials, fiscal agents, local boards, community groups, state and local employment and training providers. Comments received are considered in finalizing policies. Briefings and presentations are made statewide to increase understanding and input regarding the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act.

2. Evolution of Existing Systems and One-Stop Requirements

Mississippi has not implemented the one-stop system as described in WIA. To guide the establishment of quality one-stop system services, the Governor has adopted the recommendations of the State Workforce Investment Board and issued state policy outlining the legislative and regulatory requirements in the establishment and operation of the one-stop delivery system.

The procedures recognize the following state agency partners: Mississippi Development Authority, Mississippi Employment Security Commission, Mississippi Board of Community and Junior Colleges, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Section 134 (c) (2) of WIA allows various configurations of one-stop service delivery sites: full service, affiliate, specialty, and access points. All of the integrated sites compose the one-stop delivery system. The State's policy provides local workforce investment boards, with the approval of the local elected officials, with the responsibility of determining the appropriate configuration of these four possible sites within each workforce area. The State has incorporated the concept of the "network" defined in Section 134(c)(2) (B) of WIA with the definition of "one-stop system." The One-Stop Partners may be linked physically or electronically or technologically to provide services and to provide information on the availability of core services in the local area.

Additionally, the state will develop and make available a technical assistance guide describing best practices of model one-stop centers across the nation.

Each local workforce area must have at least one full-service site. Based on local needs, any additional full-service sites may be operated and any combination of affiliate sites, specialty sites and access points may be selected to supplement the full-service site or sites.

As stated in Section 121(d)(2) of WIA, the local board, with agreement of the chief elected official, is authorized to certify one-stop operators. The technical assistance guide will include model certification procedures.

Section 121(b)(1)(B) of WIA lists the programs and activities to be included in the one-stop system. At a minimum, access to the services from the following programs shall be available at the full-service site:

- a. WIA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker;
- b. WIA Title I Job Corps, if available;
- c. WIA Title I Veterans, if available;
- d. WIA Title I Native American, if available;
- e. WIA Title I Youth Opportunity Grants, if available;
- f. WIA Title I funded Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers, if available;

- g. Welfare-to-Work, if available;
- h. Employment Service;
- i. Veterans Employment Service, Chapter 41 of Title 38 US Code;
- j. Adult Education and Literacy under WIA Title II;
- k. Vocational Rehabilitation;
- l. Senior Community Service Employment Program, Older Americans Act;
- m. Vocational Education;
- n. North American Free Trade Agreement / Transitional Adjustment Assistance;
- o. Trade Adjustment Assistance;
- p. Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training, if available;
- q. Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training, if available; and
- r. Unemployment Insurance.

Section 121(b)(2) of WIA lists additional one-stop partners that are encouraged to provide services through the system.

- a. Community college and secondary vocational education placement services, job search classes, pre-employment, financial aid, and related services;
- b. Community mental health programs, particularly those related to job training/placement;
- c. Substance abuse services;
- d. Economic development services;
- e. Homeless programs;
- f. AmeriCorps program;
- g. Child Care;
- h. Housing Assistance;
- i. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- j. Transportation systems and service providers; and
- k. All local employment and training programs and sources of funds.

In addition to these programs, local boards will be encouraged to add apprenticeship programs.

Based on nominations received, the local elected officials make appointments to the local Workforce Investment Boards and are partners with the boards in oversight of the system. The major function of the boards will be making decisions and establishing policies. These policies must meet the needs of the local employers, employees, and potential employees and facilitate the integration of working relationships among the partners.

The core services listed in Section 134(d)(2) of the Workforce Investment Act shall be available at every full-service site. To avoid duplication of services traditionally provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act, this requirement is limited to those applicable core services that are in addition to the basic labor exchange services traditionally provided in the local area under the Wagner-Peyser program. While a partner would not, for example, be required to duplicate an assessment provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act, the partner would be expected to be responsible for any needed assessment that includes additional elements specifically tailored to participants under the partner's program.

Core services are information and resources available to everyone free of charge. They help people access resources for job-finding efforts, including the use of information and tools, whether on electronic systems, printed or audio-visual in nature, and are preparatory to job search. These services, at a minimum, consist of:

- a. Determinations of whether individuals are eligible to receive assistance from WIA Title I Adult or Dislocated Worker funding;
- b. Outreach, intake (which may include worker profiling), and orientation to the information and other services available through the One-Stop System;
- c. Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs;
- d. Job search and placement assistance, and where appropriate, career counseling;
- e. Employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including (i) job vacancy listings in such labor market areas; (ii) information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs; and (iii) information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings and skill requirements for such occupations;
- f. When made available by the State, performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services as described in WIA Title I Section 122, provided by program, and eligible providers of youth activities described in WIA Title I Section 123, providers of adult education described in WIA Title II, providers of post secondary vocational education activities and vocational education activities available to school dropouts under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied technology Education Act (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.), and providers of vocational rehabilitation program activities described in Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.);
- g. Information regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance measures and any additional performance information with respect to the one-stop delivery system in the local area.
- h. Information relating to the availability of supportive services, including childcare and transportation, available in the local area, and referral to such services, as appropriate;
- i. Information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation;
- j. Assistance in establishing eligibility for Welfare-to-Work activities authorized under Section 403(a)(5) of the Social Security Act (as added by Section 50001 of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997) available in the local area and for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs that are not funded under the Workforce Investment Act that are available in the local area;
- k. Follow up services for customers registered for intensive and/or training services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for customers in WIA Title I activities who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for not less than 12 months after the first day of the employment, as appropriate; and

- l. Rapid response services. The State is responsible for providing rapid response activities. However, these activities are carried out in the local areas in conjunction with the Local Boards and the chief elected officials.

The intensive services listed in Section 134(d)(3) of the Workforce Investment Act shall be available or accessible at every full-service.

Intensive services are available to targeted populations to support workforce development efforts based on program eligibility and other criteria determined locally. Minimally, the following customer groups may be afforded access to intensive services available within funding constraints and based on eligibility:

- a. Adults and dislocated workers who are unemployed and are unable to obtain employment through core services and who have been determined by a one-stop site staff member to be in need of intensive services to obtain employment; or
- b. Adults and dislocated workers who are employed, but who are determined by a one-stop site staff member to be in need of intensive services to obtain or retain employment that allows for self-sufficiency.
- c. Section 134(d)(4)(E) of WIA states that in the event that funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities are limited, priority shall be given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals for intensive services and training services.

The following intensive services, at a minimum, will be available, as funding permits, to customers who are included in one of the above-mentioned customer groups. Some individuals may not be eligible to receive all intensive services.

- a. Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers, which may include (i) diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools and (ii) in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals;
- b. Development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals;
- c. Group counseling;
- d. Individual counseling and career planning;
- e. Case management for participants seeking training services;
- f. Short-term prevocational services, including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct, to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training; and
- g. Section 663.200 of 20 CFR Part 652 allows out-of area job search assistance, literacy activities related to basic workforce readiness, relocation assistance, internships, and work experience based on an assessment or individual employment plan.

The training services listed in Section 134(d)(4) of the Workforce Investment Act shall be available or accessible at every full-service center.

Training services are available to targeted populations to support workforce development efforts based on program eligibility and other criteria determined locally. Minimally, the following customer groups will be afforded access to training services available within funding constraints and based on eligibility:

- a. Adults and dislocated workers who have met the eligibility requirements for intensive services and who are unable to obtain or retain employment which provides for self-sufficiency through such services; and
- b. Adults and dislocated workers who after an interview, evaluation or assessment and case management have been determined by a one-stop staff member to be in need of training services and to have the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services; and
- c. Adults and dislocated workers who select programs of training services included on the eligible provider list that are directly linked to the employment opportunities in the local area involved or in another area in which the adults or dislocated workers receiving such services are willing to relocate; and
- d. Adults and dislocated workers who are unable to obtain grant assistance for services, including federal Pell Grants or who require assistance beyond the assistance made available under other grant assistance programs, including federal Pell Grants; and
- e. Adults and dislocated workers who are determined to be eligible in accordance with the state's priority system, if established by the Governor.

The following training services may be available, as funding permits, to customers who are included in one of the above-mentioned customer groups.

Some customers may not be eligible to receive all training services.

- a. Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- b. On-the-job training;
- c. Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs;
- d. Training programs operated by the private sector;
- e. Skill upgrading and retraining;
- f. Entrepreneurial training;
- g. Job readiness training;
- h. Adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with the services described above; and
- i. Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training

3. Capacity Building of Boards and Staff

Capacity building activities with both the State Workforce Investment Board and local boards will continue through Program Years 1999 and 2000 to ensure that boards fulfill the critical leadership roles envisioned by WIA. At the specific request of local fiscal agents, the state has competitively procured a consultant to deliver three-staged training to each requesting local board beginning in April 2000. The training will be designed to assist and facilitate local boards make decisions necessary for the initial implementation of the one-stop delivery system.

Prior to July 1, 2000, the state plans to sponsor training or workshops regarding the design of the new youth programs, development of memorandums of understanding, one-stop certification and standards, eligible provider list, individual training accounts, and WIA registration and reporting. A team consisting of state and local partners will guide capacity building efforts. This team will prioritize training to be provided after July 1. We anticipate such training to first focus on skills of front line workers and include continuous improvement practices, measuring customer satisfaction and using such information to improve work processes, managing self-services, and using the one-stop operating system. Training on administrative and management will focus on federal OMB circulars and WIA reporting.

The state has already solicited qualified vendors interested in being included on an inventory. As the team identifies specifications for individual capacity building efforts, RFPS may be released to identify the best training provider that is available during a selected time at the best cost. The grantee's procurement policy will be used in selecting training contractors.

4. Waivers

Mississippi received several waivers under the Job Training Partnership Act. The State has requested approval to extend the use of these waivers through June 30, 2000. At this time, no WIA issues that may be waived have been identified.

B. Services

1. Employment and Training Activities

Core, intensive, and training services will be available to all individuals through One-Stop sites located throughout the local areas. The Local Workforce Investment Boards will tailor core services to the needs of the local areas. After obtaining core services, intensive services may be provided to adults and dislocated workers who are unemployed and are unable to obtain employment providing for self-sufficiency consistent with the state's established priority of services policy. The Local Workforce Investment Boards will establish minimum core service levels for individuals to become eligible for intensive services and any additional criteria for eligibility to receive intensive services. However, the state will establish minimum reporting and file documentation requirements.

Individuals who have met the eligibility requirements for intensive services and are unable to obtain or retain employment providing self-sufficiency utilizing intensive services may receive training services consistent with the criteria established by Local Workforce Investment Boards. The Local Workforce Investment Boards may also establish additional criteria for eligibility to receive training services. However, the state will establish minimum reporting and file documentation requirements.

Employment and training services will be available to customers based on informed individual choice whether receiving core, intensive, or training services. Many core services may be available as self-service in multiple ways including electronic, printed, audio-visual or other optional methods. Methods for ensuring services are accessible to individuals with disabilities mandates

alternate methods of service provision. Until consumer reports are available electronically (currently scheduled for a December 2000 implementation), consumer reports will be available at one-stop sites in written format. Customers eligible for intensive services will work closely with the One-Stop operator to tailor services to meet individual employment goals. Those customers eligible for training services will use individual training account funds to select providers whose services and reported performance meet their needs. Beginning July 1, 2000, the eligible provider list will be available at one-stop sites in written format. The state has targeted the availability of the eligible provider list in electronic format by December 2000. However, individual training account funds will not be used for on-the-job or customized training activities. The eligible provider list, the consumer reports, and the ITA system are intended to maximize customer choice in the selection of training activities.

Local boards may, after at least a 30-day public comment period, award contracts for training services if an insufficient number of eligible providers are in a local area. Additionally, a local board may award contracts for training consistent with Section 663.430 of the federal regulations if it determines that a special population faces multiple barriers to employment and that the provider demonstrates effectiveness in serving the population.

2. Coordination of Services

One-stop sites will provide access to programs and activities carried out by the required partners as identified in Section 134(d)(2). To meet the access requirement, one-stop operators are to assist the customer with applying for the partner program and facilitate the receipt of services by the customer if applicable. The one-stop partners may be linked physically, electronically, or technologically to provide services and to provide information on the availability of core services in the local area.

Universal access will be provided at the full-service or comprehensive sites in every local workforce investment area including areas that are predominantly rural. Labor exchange services will be available to all employers and job seekers, including unemployment insurance claimants, veterans, migrant and seasonal farm workers, and individuals with disabilities. In each local workforce investment area, in at least one physical center, staff funded under the Wagner-Peyser Act will provide core and applicable intensive services including staff-assisted labor exchange services. Core and intensive services may be delivered through any of the three methods of service delivery: a. Self-service, b. Facilitated self-help services, or c. Staff-assisted service.

The technical assistance guide for one-stop certification issued by the State suggests that the comprehensive and affiliated site locations be based on factors that make locations convenient geographically for customers. Factors recommended for consideration include population centers, commuting patterns, and reasonable travel time. Workforce Investment Area Local Elected Officials and Local Workforce Investment Boards will have the responsibility of determining how best to serve individuals, regardless of their residence, based on available resources.

The technical assistance guide for one-stop certification issued by the State also addresses accommodations for persons with disabilities. The guide recommends that all sites give priority to assuring that persons with disabilities are provided with assistive devices to ensure access to all services. The guide recommends that an accessibility assessment be performed at each site by an appropriate Americans with Disabilities Act specialist. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services will provide technical assistance and consultation for ADA compliance.

Consistent with the regulations, services traditionally provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act will not be duplicated. While a partner may not, for example, duplicate an assessment provided under the Wagner-Peyser activities, the partner may provide any additional assessment tailored to the partner program.

Services provided by each of the One-Stop partners will be managed through Memorandums of Understanding with the local boards. These Memoranda of Understanding will include, but not limited to, the requirements of Section 121. The local boards will negotiate agreements with the following:

- Mississippi Employment Security Commission for veterans programs, Wagner-Peyser, NAFTA/TAA, and unemployment insurance;
- Batesville Job Corps Center (Area 2), Crystal Springs Job Corps Center (Area 3), and Gulfport Job Corps Center (Area 6) for Title I Job Corps;
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians for Title I Native Americans (Area 2 only);
- Mississippi Delta Council for Farmworker Opportunities, Inc. for Title I Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (Area 1);
- Mississippi Action for Community Education (Area 1) and Hinds County (Area 4) for Welfare-to-Work;
- Mississippi Community and Junior College Board for Adult Education and Literacy under WIA Title II;
- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services for vocational rehabilitation;
- Area Agencies on Aging, Green Thumb, XX for the Senior Community Service Employment Program, Older Americans Act;
- Community colleges for post-secondary vocational education;
- Community action agencies for Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training; and
- Local housing authorities for Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training.

3. Fund Leveraging

The Wagner-Peyser Act 10% set-aside funds will be leveraged with federal and State resources to ensure the capacity of the Employment Service to provide necessary services to job seekers and employers involved in the one-stop system. The 7(b) funds will be utilized to augment services to two special groups of dislocated workers: (1) Trade impacted and (2) Profiled claimants. Resources for these two groups are very limited, especially in the rural areas. Thus, this funding is important to the delivery of services.

4. Special Groups

Staff at the One-Stop centers will be trained to be sensitive to the needs of all individuals. Individuals who have special requirements will be accommodated to ensure an appropriate level of service is provided.

Each LWIB is required to ensure that all facilities, programs, and services are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities will be afforded opportunities for training activities designed to improve participation in the workforce and lead to higher earnings.

LWIBs will be encouraged to provide information regarding the career opportunities available in non-traditional employment, and assist interested individuals in obtaining training for non-traditional employment. Individuals will be assessed to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities they possess related to non-traditional employment opportunities.

LWIBs will be encouraged to coordinate with the county offices of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, the administering agency for Title V funds to enhance services to older workers. Coordination activities will include, at a minimum, receiving and making referrals of older individuals seeking services through the One-Stop centers. However, the LWIBs and department directors in each county will determine the degree and nature of the relationship.

Women and individuals with limited English-speaking abilities will receive equal treatment and have access to the full array of programs and services available through the One-Stop centers.

Displaced homemakers services are available, as an eligible category of dislocated workers. Rapid response services will be made available to displaced homemakers in addition to the One-Stop program and services. Displaced homemakers will receive services that support entry into the workforce.

Customer groups and services are listed on the chart:

CUSTOMER	SERVICE
Customer with low income	Gainful employment with opportunities for advancement
Customer with multiple barriers	Support services addressing the employment barriers
Dislocated workers	Training/Readjustment Services for current market demands
Displaced homemakers	Services to support entry into the workforce
Migrant and seasonal farm	Off-season employment and skills training

CUSTOMER	SERVICE
workers	
Minorities	Equal treatment and accessibility to services
Veterans	Access to priority services

All services will be provided in compliance with the nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the Workforce Investment Act, Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Age Discrimination Act, Title IX of the Education Act, and the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act.

5. Funding Priorities

Section 134(d)(4)(E) stipulates that if funds allocated for adult employment and training activities are limited, priority in the provision of intensive and training services will be given to public assistance recipients and other low-income adults. TANF is the only form of public assistance available in Mississippi. Currently, TANF funds are sufficient to support intensive and training activities for TANF recipients. However, approximately 20% of Mississippi families and 51% of female household families are considered to have an income below the poverty level. Therefore, the Mississippi Workforce Investment System will target outreach activities to such adults, including working adults and former TANF recipients whose employment does not allow for self-sufficiency, food stamp recipients, homeless individuals, and individuals with a disability whose own income does not exceed the poverty level or 70% of the lower living standard. The one-stop service delivery system will identify low-income adults who access core services and determine if intensive or training services will assist the individual in obtaining self-sufficiency. If such determination is made, the one-stop operator will give priority to such adults in the provision of intensive and training services. Local boards will describe how this priority provision will be implemented. Wagner-Peyser activities conducted through the Mississippi Workforce Investment System will continue the veteran's preference requirements.

Local boards will be encouraged to develop agreements with the Department of Human Services to ensure that quality core services are provided to TANF recipients within the one-stop career delivery system. Additionally, such agreements should describe procedures to ensure that needed one-stop system services are continued once recipients are no longer eligible for TANF with the goal of assisting an individual reach economic self-sufficiency.

The State Workforce Investment Board will seek guidance from the department of Human Services relative to the availability of TANF funds for intensive and training services. The priority of services policy will be adjusted when necessary to ensure that TANF recipients have access to services needed for reaching self-sufficiency.

6. Determining Employer Needs

Mississippi is firmly committed to providing a customer-service focus in the delivery of services at both the state and local level. The one-stop service delivery system will develop methods and measures to collect employer satisfaction information and identify the needs of employers.

Methods of measuring satisfaction and identifying needs of employers will include surveys, focus groups, intercept interviews, and employee contacts using the Simply Better: Self-Assessment System - Customer Focus and Satisfaction.

The one-stop partners will determine measurement values and frequency.

Employees of the one-stop will be trained in intercept and contact techniques.

Focus groups will start with Job Service Employer Committees (local and State) and will be expanded to identifiable employer groups within each Workforce Area.

One-stop partners will participate in the American Customer Satisfaction Index as coordinated through the local WIA Boards.

A broad range of information and assistance will be available to the employers:

- Assistance in individual and mass recruiting,
- Referrals of skilled applicants / job match,
- Information on available government incentives and services, such as Work Opportunities Tax Credit,
- Labor market information to include labor pools, comparative wage data, and demographic projections,
- Education and training program information,
- Access to internet-based services such as America's Job Bank,
- Information and/or referrals for community and social services such as area agencies on aging and layoff assistance,
- Employment-related and other information such as workers' compensation and apprenticeship programs.

The tax credit programs are administered through a centralized unit (Work Opportunity Tax Credit staff) that processes applications and issues certifications. Outreach to employers is made through service delivery points using Wagner-Peyser staff.

Promotional campaigns will be used to reach both new and established employers. Examples of methods to disseminate information include employer visits, telephone contacts, employer committees, and seminars.

7. Service to Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service Claimants

Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services shall be jointly funded by Wagner-Peyser and WIA to serve UI claimants identified through the worker-profiling program. Workforce Investment Areas that have more dislocated workers than resources may limit the number of profiled claimants who are offered services. Areas with few demands on their funds may recruit extensively from the list of profiled claimants.

Profiled UI claimants have access to the full array of Wagner-Peyser and dislocated worker services offered by the local one-stop sites. The selected claimants will be provided comprehensive assessment of skills and needs to be used in developing a case management profile and plan. (All selected claimants will be advised of the result of not participating on their eligibility to draw UI benefits.) Intensive exposure to labor market information, career choice, and occupational information will be provided using the ALMIS, Choices, Automated Labor Exchange, and America's Job Bank. Application, résumé preparation, and interviewing skills information will also be provided. Profiled claimants will be referred to available job openings and/or provided job development contacts to employers by staff. An automated exchange including registration and client services exists between the Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance to administer the "Work Test."

At a minimum, the profiled UI claimants will be provided all the core services. If profiled claimants' job searches are not successful after using the core resources, they will participate in intensive services and, then, training services.

8. Service to Persons with Disabilities

Customers with disabilities will receive the full range of services. As one-stop partners, the Wagner-Peyser funded staff and the Vocational Rehabilitation coordinators will provide specialized services to customers with disabilities. All centers shall adhere to ADA requirements to assure that customers with disabilities are able to access or have assistance in accessing job listings and other resources. Knowledgeable and competent staff shall be available to assist each customer as needed. The staff shall be capable of responding to the needs of persons with disabilities.

9. Services to Veterans

All one-stop sites receiving Wagner-Peyser funds or housing Wagner-Peyser staff will provide veterans with priority employment and training services as defined by Title 38, U.S. Code, Chapters 41, 42, and 43; Title 38, Chapter IX, Code of Federal Regulations, codified at 20 CFR 1001.100 et seq. Veterans and other eligible persons will be provided intake and assessment, access to core services, intensive services, and training services as needed through the one-stop system. This group will also be provided priority in case management services following assessment, job development, job training, referral and job placement services. In addition, priority to all jobs listed through the Wagner-Peyser services, as well as access to Federal Contractor Program job listings and job information, will be available to this group. Trained local veterans employment representatives will be the primary providers of case management services in locations where they are available.

10. Role of LVER/DVOPS

LVER/DVOP positions shall be in addition to and shall not supplant Wagner-Peyser staff in providing services to veterans. LVER/DVOP positions shall be dedicated to providing the maximum in employment and training opportunities to veterans in accordance with Title 38, U.S.C., Chapters 41, 42 and 20 CFR 1001.

The State will consult with the Director for Veterans' Employment and Training on the assignment of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representative staff to the one-stop system. The assigned Local Veterans Employment Representative will take the lead in ensuring that One-Stop staff are trained in all aspects of services to veterans. Veterans, members of reserve components, and other individuals whose job rights are protected under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act of 1994, et.seq., will be provided information and, when appropriate, assistance in filing claims. Veterans and other eligible persons as defined in Paragraph 9 above will be provided priority in case management services as appropriate following needs assessment. In locations with Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative staff assigned who have been trained as case managers at the National Veterans Training Institute, those staff will be the primary providers of case management services. In locations where there are no Disabled Veterans Outreach Program or Local Veterans Employment Representative staff assigned, provisions may be made to out-station these staff to provide technical assistance and directed services for veterans and other eligible persons relative to veterans employment and training services. Additionally, if Disabled Veterans Outreach staff outstationing is deemed impossible for geographic or other reasons, information will be made available through electronic connections. Performance and reporting requirements on the character, quality, and quantity of services provided to veterans will be established in accordance with those prescribed by Title 38, U.S.C., Chapter 41 and section 112(b)(8)(B) of the Workforce Investment Act.

The one-stop operator will ensure that all sites provide priority labor exchange services to disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam-era, and specifically, when making referrals to job openings and training opportunities, shall observe the following order of priority:

- a. Special disabled veterans,
- b. Vietnam-era veterans,
- c. Disabled veterans other than special disabled veterans,
- d. All other veterans and eligible persons, and
- e. Non-veterans.

The State will perform a desk audit of the provision of services to veterans at each site at least annually. A report with findings and recommendations for corrective actions will be provided to the Executive Director of the Mississippi Employment Security Commission.

11. Service to the Agricultural Community

Employment services will be provided to Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) in compliance with federal regulations 20 CFR Part 653, Subpart B. Plans to transition MSFW services into the State's One-Stop System will be coordinated with local workforce investment boards, in collaboration with required and/or encouraged partners, as specified in the Workforce Investment Act.

Each workforce investment area shall provide the same range of services to MSFWs Employment services as is available to the general population. Outreach, assessment, off-season employment and skills training will be provided to MSFWs in compliance with federal regulations. MSFWs will have access to descriptions of all programs, eligibility information, access to applications and other benefits/services and projections on a basis equivalent and proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs.

Mississippi is not a significant MSFW state; however, the State will continue efforts to meet the established annual services standard requirements to ensure continuation of equitable services to all MSFWs. The five equity level indicators measuring non-MSFW to MSFW services are referrals to jobs, provision of some service, referrals to supportive services, counseling interviews, and job development contacts. Contacts will be made with partner agencies to promote better relations and to identify problems/barriers that should be addressed. This combination of resources and knowledge shall ensure a more efficient delivery of services to MSFWs.

Services will be available to MSFWs through the one-stop service delivery system. The State is dedicated to ensuring continuous equity of services to these workers.

All Wagner-Peyser services described in section IV.B.6. will be provided to agricultural employers through the one-stop service delivery system. These include:

- Assistance in individual and mass recruiting,
- Referrals of skilled applicants/job match,
- Information on available government incentives and services, such as Work Opportunities Tax Credit,
- Labor market information to include labor pools, comparative wage data, and demographic projections,
- Education and training program information,
- Access to internet-based services such as America's Job Bank,
- Information and/or referrals for community and social services such as area agencies on aging and layoff assistance,
- Employment-related and other information such as workers' compensation and apprenticeship programs.

Additional Wagner-Peyser Act services to agricultural employers are described in the attached Agricultural Services Submission to the WIA/Wagner-Peyser Act Plan. The following section, "Labor Exchange Strategy," also applies to agricultural and nonagricultural applicants and employers.

12. Labor Exchange Strategy

Customer choice and universal access are two of the basic principles used in the design of Mississippi's one-stop system. The Wagner-Peyser program is fully integrated into the system and adheres to these principles by offering services through three tiers. All Wagner-Peyser staff shall be employees of the

Mississippi Employment Security Commission; however, these staff will be housed at the one-stop sites and will report to the one-stop operator. The full-service or comprehensive sites shall offer the three tiers full time. (There is at least one full-service site in each workforce investment area.) An affiliate site may offer the three tiers depending upon the needs in the area. The first tier of service is self-service. The customer may select this service option through the one-stop service delivery system. Also, numerous other access points will offer self-service access through technology. In a self-help format, information will be available to customers through a variety of media including printed materials and personal computers with electronic connections to employment, training, and internet sites. Through the internet and other software, job seekers and employers may access a variety of useful information. The sites will link with America's Job Bank, Talent Bank, résumé services, job match services, and labor market information. Resource Centers at the sites will offer self-assessment software, fax machines, telephones, and copy machines to assist with job search.

The second tier of service is facilitated self-help. Any customer using the self-service option may request minimal service to expedite his or her efforts. For those customers needing facilitated self-help, there will be access to knowledgeable one-stop staff for scheduled group orientations providing a brief overview of available services and access to services through the system. The third tier, staff-assisted service, is available through the one-stop service delivery system through group and/or individual activities. These services may include job search workshops, assessment, career counseling, labor market information, job referrals, referrals to supportive services, and referrals to training. Customers who cannot use self-service or who need more than minimal assistance in job search will work with one-stop staff. Staff assistance or direct one-on-one assistance may also be available for those customers who may not be comfortable accessing the services electronically. If staff-assisted services do not result in job placement, the customers will move to intensive services and, then, to training consistent with the state's priority of service policy. These various approaches are necessary so that any customer may obtain needed information in the easiest and most helpful format.

13. Rapid Response Activities

The Employment Training Division (ETD) of the Mississippi Development Authority is the lead agency for providing rapid response services in Mississippi. The ETD is the agency designated to receive WARN notices. Upon the receipt of a WARN notice, the ETD staff contacts the company within 48 hours to discuss the available rapid response services and offers assistance to the company and the affected workers. An on-site visit with the company representative and, when appropriate, the union or employee representative is scheduled as soon as possible. During the on-site visit, staff obtains the pertinent information needed to develop a plan of action to assist the company and the workers who will be laid off. At the on-site visit staff will determine if the closure/layoff is due to increased imports from Mexico or Canada or a shift in production to those countries. If

this is the case and the company has not filed a petition for North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), staff will provide the company official with the necessary forms and information on the filing process.

The ETD may encourage the establishment of an Employee Assistance Committee comprised of employee and company management representatives. The committee can be instrumental in identifying workers' needs and developing a plan to provide the needed services to the workers.

The specific functions, the procedures for providing assistance, and the services available are describe further in Section 13c. -- *Available Employer and Dislocated Worker Assistance*.

To ensure that a coordinated and consistent approach to providing Rapid Response services is delivered in the state, the ETD has developed a Rapid Response Operating Procedures Manual, which will be revised to reflect the changes occurring in the state's rapid response system as a result of the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act. The manual describes each step in providing rapid response services-- from making the initial contact with the employer, to conducting the on-site visit, coordinating with the appropriate partner agencies, and providing information and on-site services to the dislocated workers. This manual will be distributed to each local workforce investment area to give them guidance on providing rapid response services and to ensure that a coordinated and consistent approach to rapid response continues throughout the state. The ETD staff may provide state-wide training to the appropriate local workforce investment area and one-stop center staff to insure that there is a clear understanding of the rapid response system and the role of each partner in the process.

a. Responsibility

As described above, the ETD is the lead agency for providing and coordinating the delivery of rapid response services in the state.

b. Local Board Involvement

When the ETD learns of a layoff or closure, either through the receipt of a WARN notice, through the media, or through contacts in the local area, staff will immediately notify the Chief Elected Official and the local Board representative of the appropriate local workforce investment area. The Chief Elected Official and the representative of the local board and workforce area will be invited to the on-site visit with the employer. Including the Chief Elected Official and the appropriate community representatives in the rapid response process is vital to providing comprehensive services to dislocated workers. Because of the influence these individuals have in the local community, they can ensure that all available resources are marshaled to assist the company and the workers.

Local workforce areas will work cooperatively if more than one area is affected. The procedures to be followed in contacting the company, providing services, and the functions of the State and local areas is described

in greater detail in the Rapid Response Procedures Manual and in Section 13.c.

The State will reserve not more than 25% percent of the state allocation for dislocated worker employment and training activities for statewide rapid response activities, in accordance with Section 133(a)(2) of the Act. The State may allocate rapid response funds to local workforce areas based on mass layoff or plant closure activity.

c. Available Employer and Dislocated Worker Assistance

Because the ETD is a division of the Mississippi Development Authority, it is in an excellent position to facilitate early intervention services for employers. When the ETD learns of a layoff or closure through a WARN notice or other means, the ETD immediately contacts the department's Industry Liaison Bureau. Representatives of this bureau notify the appropriate staff of the local economic development agency that a company may be in need of assistance. The staff of the local economic development office is invited to attend the on-site visit with the employer to gather information about the circumstances surrounding the impending closure or layoff. The local economic development staff is in a position to assist the employer in exploring options that may help them to avert the layoff. In addition, if it is evident that a closure will occur, local economic development staff may be able to market the site to employers who will be moving to the area.

To determine the assistance needed by the dislocated workers, the ETD has developed an Employee Survey form. The form is provided to the employer during the on-site visit for immediate distribution to the employees. The form assesses the employees' education and skill levels, work history, employment assistance needs, and training interests. After compiling and analyzing the information provided by the employees, the ETD staff can identify the workers' specific needs and facilitate the delivery of services from the appropriate partner agencies. Working in coordination with the appropriate local workforce investment area and the one-stop center staff, a plan of action is developed to deliver services to the affected dislocated workers.

During orientation sessions with employees, the ETD staff, a representative of the appropriate local workforce investment area, and representatives of the partner agencies such as, the Employment Service, Unemployment Insurance, community college, Department of Human Services, and others, will provide the workers with information on available services and assistance. Workers will be encouraged to visit the local one-stop center to access appropriate core, intensive, or training services. These services will include information on NAFTA/TAA benefits when appropriate. In Mississippi, the Mississippi Employment Security Commission (MESC) administers NAFTA/TAA. If a company has filed a petition for NAFTA or TAA, a representative of the MESC will describe the training and adjustment services available during the orientation session, and explain how employees may apply for benefits. Local Employment Service staff interview each

NAFTA/TAA eligible applicant regarding suitable training opportunities available to them and individual job plans are developed. A NAFTA/TAA brochure that describes available services and benefits will be provided to each employee.

When the ETD receives a WARN notice, staff notifies the manager of the One-Stop Center that serves the area impacted by the layoff. After the on-site visit with the company, ETD staff contacts the One-Stop Center manager to discuss the specific circumstances of the layoff to determine if special provisions must be made for the center to serve large numbers of dislocated workers. When appropriate, the manager participates in the orientation sessions with the affected employees to explain how to access services at the center and to discuss any special provisions that have been made to provide services.

Workers will be encouraged to visit the local one-stop center to access appropriate core, intensive or training services. Core services will include job search and placement assistance, career information, lists of job vacancies, initial assessment of skills, and information about skills needed for in-demand jobs and other available resources. If an adult is unable to secure employment providing a self sufficient wage, that individual will receive more intensive services including comprehensive assessments, development of individual employment plans, group or individual counseling, case management, and short-term pre-vocational services. In the event intensive services are received and an individual is still not able to find a good job, then training services directly linked to job opportunities may be provided. Self-sufficiency for dislocated workers is defined as a wage comparable to the wage at dislocation.

14. Services to Eligible Youth

State requirements and activities will be developed to assist youth who have special needs or barriers to employment, including those who are pregnant, parenting, or have disabilities. These requirements will describe how coordination with Job Corps, Youth Opportunity grants, and other youth programs will occur.

Utilizing the Youth Councils, the Local Workforce Investment Boards will develop and build meaningful relationships with local entities, agencies and service providers to ensure that all of the services required by the Workforce Investment Act are available to eligible youth in each local area. Youth activities that provide wide-range comprehensive, collaborative services will emphasize long-term service. The year-round and summer programs of the past will be combined to provide long-term multi-faceted activities to youth. These activities will directly link academic and occupational learning.

Local youth activities will be connected to the One-Stop Centers. The local plans will describe the relationship between youth activities and the one-stop, including coordination, the provision of youth activities, linkages to the labor market and employers, and access for eligible youth to all WIA services.

Individual training accounts may be provided to eligible older youth through the One-Stop Centers.

Eligible youth will receive comprehensive assessment to determine which program elements best met their needs and in what sequence and method needed activities/ services should be provided. As determined appropriate, each of the following required program elements will be made available to youth customers, either directly through Workforce Investment Act resources or through referral to other programs:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction,
- Alternative secondary school services,
- Summer employment opportunities,
- Paid and unpaid work experiences,
- Occupational skill training,
- Leadership development opportunities,
- Supportive services,
- Adult mentoring,
- Follow-up services, and
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

To ensure coordination and guard against duplication, Local Workforce Investment Boards and their Youth Councils will determine if required services are already available in the area. Local boards should use available services through the educational community, welfare, justice and law enforcement, and other entities whenever possible. One of the primary responsibilities of the Youth Councils will be serve as a catalyst for coordination and collaboration between Workforce Investment Act programs and existing activities.

The State will encourage local areas and Youth Councils in areas with a high poverty level to pursue Youth Opportunity Grants as they become available.

15. Youth Program Design

Each Local Workforce Investment Area will describe the local framework for the following program design elements required in Section 129(c)(1) of the Act in the local plan:

- An objective assessment of each participant;
- Individual service strategies; and
- Services that prepare youth for postsecondary educational opportunities, link academic and occupational learning, prepare youth for employment, and provide connections to intermediary organizations linked to the job market and employers.

Each local area will also describe how it will provide each of the following ten program elements required by Section 129(c)(2) of the Act in the local plan:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction,
- Alternative secondary school services,
- Summer employment opportunities,

- Paid and unpaid work experiences,
- Occupational skill training,
- Leadership development opportunities,
- Supportive services,
- Adult mentoring,
- Follow-up services, and
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

Each youth customer will initially enter objective assessment to identify his/her academic level, skills level, and service needs. Based on the results of the assessment a service strategy will be developed to specify employment goals and appropriate achievement objectives. The specific mix of the program elements specified by Section 129(c)(2) of the Workforce Investment Act to be provided to the youth will be based on the needs of the youth.

Each local Youth Council will recommend the local design of the required elements to the Local Workforce Investment Board based on state and Department of Labor guidance. The Youth Councils will be comprised of individuals with expertise in serving youth and youth with barriers to employment. Youth programs will also be linked directly to the local labor market needs and resources. Program elements and activities will be designed based on the lessons learned under the Job Training Partnership Act. Each activity will provide a strong connection between academic learning and occupational skills training. Traditional employment and training services will be augmented by an array of youth development activities.

The key to the design of the new Workforce Investment Act youth program will be local flexibility. The State feels that flexibility is crucial to ensuring that the workforce development and economic development needs of the local areas and the State are met.

C. System Infrastructure

1. ITA Management

Training services will be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). The ITA will be established by a One-Stop center operator on behalf of an eligible individual. The LWIBs, in conjunction with State Policy will establish policy guidance on conditions for the receipt of ITAs. At a minimum these conditions must include:

- How individuals will receive core and intensive services prior to the issuance of an ITA;
- The documentation in the individual employment plan of the need for training;
- A process for documenting how other sources were sought to help pay for training;
- How the use of ITAs will be limited to demand occupations that are appropriate for the individual;

- A process for tracking attendance, grades, and completion of the training;
- A follow-up process
- Limitations on ITAs
- Payment methods for ITAs; and
- Internal procedures for the issuance of ITAs that include the application process, disbursement procedures, mechanism for tracking expenditures, and a refund policy.

The state has defined eligible training providers to include all entities referenced in section 122, including apprenticeship programs.

2. Technical and Capacity Improvement

Mississippi is using one-stop implementation grant, UI, Wagner-Peyser, and VETS dollars to fund the upgrade of Mississippi Employment Security Commission's (MESC) data network to replace vital, but increasingly antiquated, data processing and communications equipment and to provide the infrastructure to support newer technologies. The successful integration of MESC's technology infrastructure with the statewide connectivity provided by the Mississippi Information Technology Service "information highway" will allow MESC to provide additional services required for the provision of one-stop core services to include ALMIS. Access to Mississippi's information highway is critical because many of the rural areas of the state do not have internet access or the access is slow. The State's information highway is a hybrid network utilizing BellSouth Frame Relay and ATM switches with a dedicated ATM backbone between the switch areas. The switch areas include nodes in Jackson, Greenwood, Tupelo, Meridian, and Hattiesburg within the State's primary LATA and nodes in Memphis and Gulfport to service the Northwest Mississippi LATA and the South Mississippi LATA respectively. The current physical network infrastructure consists of customer endsites with dedicated endloops connected to the BellSouth switch in their serving area. The switch areas are then tied together via the dedicated backbone.

The MESC network is designed in a tiered manner with three classes of sites. These include a central office at the state level, district offices, and end sites. The state office supports the mainframe, internet access, and several hundred users. It is the core of the entire network.

The network upgrade began in mid-1999 and consists of three phases. However, some phase requirements are being addressed concurrently with other phases. Phase I of the project replaces the analog data lines with frame relay. A total of 56 local sites with network connectivity have been moved to frame relay. These sites can be moved based on decisions of local workforce investment boards in designating one-stop sites. Phase I also includes replacing the Amdahl 4725 front end processor with a Cisco 7513 router containing a CIP card for connection to the mainframe via ESCON; replacing the IBM modems in remote offices with Cisco routers with integrated DSU's; installing serial cards in local offices to connect the IBM cluster controllers and 3270 devices to the frame relay network; installing a Cisco Catalyst 2900 series Ethernet switch in each

local office for the Ethernet LAN; installing Cisco switches, routers and software in the state office for LAN's, internet access, and access to other outside governing entities; and replacing the NT 3.1 server with two IBM Netfinity 5500 M10NT servers for the state office LAN users.

Phase II consists of using all available funding sources to replace or upgrade approximately 3300 terminals, Pcs, and printers to Ethernet-attached devices in local/one-stop offices; replacing/upgrading older Pcs in the state office; adding Ethernet switches where necessary; completing site preparation in local offices such as cabling, patch panels, etc.; installing NT servers in local offices for file and print sharing, adding internet-based email systems, and installing software to centrally manage the widely disbursed network.

Phase III will consist of the implementation of new applications/technologies to more effectively accomplish business objectives. These applications could include the use of the internet to provide better services to employers and the public and the implementation of call centers.

Completion of this upgrade is scheduled for June 2000. Staff of all partner agencies will be offered training on the use of the new system to improve services for customers and more efficiently manage work. The result of the upgrade will provide the much-needed quick access to the internet tools.

Operational costs of the new system will be shared among the grant sources.

In addition to MESC's data system upgrade, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA, together with the other state agency partners, have participated in numerous software demonstrations provided by vendors which have developed products for use in the one-stop environment. As a result of this study, MDA released a Request for Proposal for the development of a business plan that includes a business requirements study/analysis, a feasibility study, capacity study, security assessment plan, and statement of resource requirements. The business requirements study will be a high-level plan detailing the requirements and specifications for a new automated system to include but not limited to a WIA participant reporting, determination of performance standards, consumer reporting system, and case management. The feasibility study will be a preliminary study that determines the direction and financial impact of the WIA delivery and reporting system implementation. The study will identify the approaches that can meet the program objectives of improved effectiveness and efficiency of operation and administration, define how each partner agency will participate, and make recommendations as to the order of data ownership and reporting. The feasibility study will include a high-level assessment that determines which alternative will provide the greatest benefit relative to costs. The analysis will include the estimated cost of developing and operating each alternative that was found viable in the feasibility study. The capacity study will examine current and projected workload estimates by participating agencies and minimally include hardware impact, network capacity and performance capabilities, network accessibility, and infrastructure operations in accordance with accepted industry practices. The security assessment plan will specify security and privacy requirements of the

potential system, including technical features to accommodate those requirements and identify specific deficiencies at the agency level.

The selected vendor in conducting study will be guided by stated limitations. The Mississippi Employment Security Commission currently runs the America Workforce Technology Solutions System, and their logical migration path will require the overall system to interface with this application. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services currently has an investment in a case management system that will be considered as an interface without additional data collection. The State of Mississippi ATM/Frame Relay backbone will be the transmission system for data exchange and integration. Relative to the consumer report system, the State Department of Education (SDOE) tracks post-secondary information only at the program level with applications that run on a single computer. SDOE plans to replace these systems with a multi-user, SQL or an Oracle based system. These state partner entities all run on various platforms and strong considerations will be given to recommending solutions that do not drastically change their operational platforms.

The proposed study is targeted for completion in late April 2000. While the RAP is for a business plan, proposals must also propose an analysis and design of a system, development and implementation of a selected solution, and maintenance and enhancement of system support. At the conclusion of the business plan, MDA will have the contractual option of continuing with the vendor for the development, installation, and maintenance of the selected system. All proposed phases are scheduled for a December 2000 production date. Until all new electronic systems are live, the state will use a modified version of its client-server based participant information system and hard-paper copies of lists and reports.

3. Employment Statistics System Improvement

Improvement in the method for delivery of timely and relative information will be emphasized for Mississippi's One-Stop system. The move to fully automated delivery of labor market information will continue and soon replace the traditional printed formats. In addition, Mississippi has been transitioning from the Occupational Labor Market Database (OLMID) to the new America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) database structure. This centralized database enables the state to pursue common application development and a standardized approach to LMI. The employment statistics data will continue to be based on the national OES program, providing standardized, detailed occupational and industry information on employment and wages. In addition, the new O*NET database will be utilized for disseminating data on job characteristics and worker attributes.

The effective use of collecting and presenting labor market and occupational information is key in matching job seekers to employers. This year, the Mississippi Employment Security Commission will have available an interactive labor market system for customers to easily access the data on occupations and industries via the Internet. The system, "LOOKUP MISSISSIPPI", will replace the existing OIS and the time-consuming process of downloading files and data. The system will allow One-Stop staff to access and retrieve all employment

statistics data from a single source, resulting in a more timely and efficient means of obtaining economic and labor market data. Further, the system will allow the customers more timely and user-friendly access to labor market data regardless of their education background or computer knowledge.

Job seekers will continue to have access to the state's career information system, which is a tool for exploring up-to-date information on occupation, education and training programs, and financial aid. This system also provides an on-line career area interest inventory, work history profiler, a module for identifying transferable work content skills, and a personal planner. This system is updated and enhanced annually and includes state specific employment outlook and wage data.

Mississippi is currently a member of the Consortium of States developing the America's Learning Exchange. The Mississippi SOICC has taken the lead role in developing the Accrediting Agencies database and the Licensed Occupations database for this national effort. Customers of the One-Stop system will be encouraged to take advantage of all the components of America's Career Kit, including America's Job Bank, America's Talent Bank, America's Learning eXchange, and America's CareerInfonet.

Plans are underway for upgrading and expanding technology, in order to utilize the other elements of ALMIS, such as the Common Intake System, Consumer Report System, and the Media Library of Occupations for the state's One-Stop system.

V. Performance Management

A. Performance Goals

In developing state performance measures, the state consulted with the workforce investment areas using TEGL 7-99 and TEGL 8-99 issued by the Department of Labor (DOL). The state calculated and provided to each area both state and local past outcomes for JTPA participants who terminated between October 1, 1997 and September 30, 1998. Wage record data was acquired to determine employment, retention, wages, and earnings change. However, the baseline data for determining the credential rate was not provided since the information is not available.

Local officials within each workforce investment area will utilize the baseline data to propose performance goals that will result in improved customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. If a local area proposes a measure below the USDOL expected level of performance, justification will be provided and considered during the negotiations between the state and local area.

On April 20, the state provided the USDOL with baseline data as described above and attached. Upon the USDOL release of negotiated performance with other states, a comparison of baseline and proposed measures will be made. The following table depicts the performance measures negotiated with and agreed to by the Department of Labor:

Category and Performance Indicator	Negotiated Measure Program Year 2003	Negotiated Measure Program Year 2004
ADULT		
Entered Employment Rate	72.50%	72.87%
Employment Retention Rate	80.00%	80.41%
6 Month Average Earnings Change	\$ 3150	\$ 3166
Employment/ Credential Rate	58.00%	58.30%
DISLOCATED WORKERS		
Entered Employment Rate	78.90%	79.30%
Employment Retention Rate	87.00%	87.44%
Earnings Replacement	95.00%	95.48%
Employment/ Credential Rate	60.00%	60.31%
OLDER YOUTH		
Entered Employment Rate	64.00%	64.30%
Employment Retention Rate	75.00%	75.38%
6 Month Average Earnings Change	\$ 2,300	\$ 2,312
Employment/ Credential Rate	38.90%	39.10%
YOUNGER YOUTH		
Goal Attainment	72.00%	72.37%
Diploma or Equivalent	52.00%	52.27%

Category and Performance Indicator	Negotiated Measure Program Year 2003	Negotiated Measure Program Year 2004
Rate		
Retention Rate	50.00%	50.300%
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION		
Participants	71.00%	71.30%
Employers	69.00%	69.30%

B. Common Data System

Mississippi currently uses a client-server information system for capturing JTPA participant enrollment. This system will be modified effective July 1 to temporarily capture WIA registrant data. Please refer to section IV.C.2. regarding Mississippi's technology infrastructure improvements. These improvements will be internet-based and include the WIA registrant reporting system, eligible provider list, consumer reports, performance measures, and optional case management. A common reporting and data system which produces reports for various federal and state partners is not planned.

Local areas will be required to adopt a standardized WIA reporting system to facilitate the collection and reporting of WIA data. The Governor has named the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) as the Performance Accountability and Customer Information (PACI) Designation. In this role, MDA has contracted with MESCC to provide quarterly wage record data based on a fixed cost.

SDA performance for program year 1997 will be calculated using the results of both methods, quarterly wage record data and 13-week follow-up telephone survey data. A comparison of the results will be made and used in the negotiation of local performance measures. The state expects to use the quarterly UI wage record data to calculate WIA performance in its first full year of operation.

C. Customer Satisfaction

The SWIB will encourage the use of Simply Better or other organizational assessment tools to support continuous improvement of the workforce investment system. Additionally, existing customer satisfaction surveys used by the local areas and various state agencies will be analyzed for best practices. A baseline will be established for customer satisfaction with the expectation that customer satisfaction will improve each year. Technical assistance will be provided by the state to develop and implement customer satisfaction measures. Methods of customer satisfaction measurement may include mail and telephone surveys, point of service questionnaires, and follow-up interviews.

At a minimum, Department of Labor published customer satisfaction measurement requirements that captures the common customer satisfaction information for national reporting and comparison will be instituted at the state level. After consultation with local workforce investment boards, the SWIB will determine if the

state will conduct only a valid statewide representative sample or if the state will increase the sample size to ensure valid results are available by each local workforce area. If the state does not collect relevant workforce area level data, each local workforce investment board will have that responsibility. Regardless, each one-stop operator will be required to establish methods for collecting customer satisfaction data regarding multiple processes employed by the center. The one-stop certification package requires each operator to establish continuous improvement practices that include using customer input and feedback in improving delivery of services.

Capacity building efforts in the fall and winter of 2000 will include one-stop service delivery and continuous improvement practices. Measuring customer satisfaction, obtaining customer input, and using customer feedback in improving systems will be the initial focus with benchmarking best practices and service by design to follow.

D. Continuous Improvement

The SWIB will take an active role in evaluating the effectiveness of workforce services throughout the state. The SWIB will establish monitoring and oversight policies that require the evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative goals. Memorandums of understanding between the key partners will ensure collaboration and encourage coordination.

E. Performance Evaluation

Performance management will be addressed by the SWIB in its strategic planning process. The state will use the core performance indicators as required by the U.S. DOL. The state will not impose further prescribed indicators in the measurement of performance at this time. The SWIB, the LWIBs, and the WIAs will receive quarterly performance reports which detail financial, programmatic, and performance data. Areas of deficiency identified in these reports will require corrective action. The state will also provide technical assistance when requested or deemed necessary. WIAs will be monitored on-site by the state and local providers will be monitored by the LWIBs. The SWIB will establish a sanction policy to address providers who fail to improve performance. This policy may include reorganization of the area or termination of provider eligibility. Performance data will also be used to ensure continuous improvement.

F. Performance Improvement Plan - Older Youth Credential Rate

1. Description of the cause(s) for failure on the measure for two consecutive years –

- a. Lack of a satisfactory data reporting and tracking system - The State of Mississippi has been working for over two years to develop and implement an efficient reporting and tracking system. The current system was not designed to be sustained over a long period of time, nor does it include applications that allow a thorough analysis and verification of the data that has been entered. Because of these deficiencies, the State does not have an expedient way to verify the accuracy of current performance data.**

- b. **Improper enrollment of Older Youth into WIA activities - Preliminary investigations by local area staff indicate that WIN Job Center case managers and data entry personnel may be enrolling WIA eligible older youth into the WIA Adult programs. A primary reason for this may be the fact that Adults are able to receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to attend training, while youth cannot. Therefore, staff may choose not to enroll eligible participants into WIA youth services, opting instead to enroll those individuals as Adults and provide them with an ITA.**
 - c. **Lack of understanding of what qualifies as a credential and/or failure to properly document the awarding of a credential – Due to the ambiguity of the Act on what may be recognized as a credential, some youth providers may be awarding credentials and not documenting said awards in the participant files. Additionally, some programs may document only nationally recognized credentials, such as a high school diploma or its equivalent.**
- 2. Description of the State’s proposed activities to improve performance on the older youth credential rate measure over the course of the coming year, including a discussion of expected outcomes for these activities and identification of the planned completion dates -**
- a. **The Mississippi Development Authority – Employment Training Division (MDA-ETD) and its partners have worked to develop a customer-oriented performance reporting system. The system, the Workforce Investment Network System (WINS), will track customer action and outcome data for the State’s one-stop system, Workforce Investment Network (WIN) in Mississippi. There are more than 60 WIN Job Centers in that system. WINS will integrate the WIA and Employment Service data collection systems.**

The State is currently working to test the WINS reporting and tracking system. Meanwhile, data validation for the current WIA BASH system is being conducted at both the State and local levels. Initial reviews of performance measure data have identified errors in reporting, the correction of which helped increase the State’s performance levels. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor Region 3 will conduct a data validation review in Mississippi on July 21-25, 2004.
 - b. **Past workshops with nationally recognized WIA experts, including John Chamberlin and Jodie Sue Kelly, have addressed the enrollment of older youth into WIA. WIN Job Center staff will receive additional technical assistance to aid them in determining how to handle the enrollment of older youth into WIA services and activities. The State is also reviewing data from the current reporting system to locate documenting data regarding the enrollment of WIA eligible older youth into the system as Adults.**

- c. **On April 30 and May 2, 2003, the Center for Workforce Learning conducted credentialing workshops for State and local area WIA staff. Attendees learned how to identify and issue credentials, with particular emphasis on the fact that States and local areas are not limited to the use of nationally recognized credentials. Attendees also learned how to develop credentials that have value to area employers and are transferable to other areas.**
- d. **The Employment Training Division (ET) will coordinate with Public and Private Ventures (PPV) to provide additional training on performance enhancement. The ETD plans to offer a one-and-a-half day workshop to local area fiscal staff, youth providers, and WIN Job Center staff that focuses on the attainment of WIA youth performance measures. Workshops were held on August 26-27 in Jackson, Mississippi, prior to the 2003 WIN-ing in Mississippi Conference. PPV may offer more intense, one-on-one assistance to local areas on an individual basis as requested by the local areas.**

3. Identification of the person(s) responsible for developing and administering the performance improvement plan-

Mr. James R. Lott, Director of the Employment Training Division, will work closely with his staff, Information Technology staff, local workforce area staff, the Mississippi Employment Security Commission, and WIN Job Center staff to design and implement activities that will lead to improving WIA performance measure rates in order to attain the performance goals for the State.

4. Public Review and Input

Upon approval of the performance improvement plan by the Region 3 Department of Labor, the plan will be incorporated in the State's Five-Year Strategic Plan as a modification. The Mississippi Development Authority-Employment Training Division will follow established procedures for public review and comment as outlined in the State Plan.

VI. Assurances

- A. The State assures that it will establish, in accordance with section 184 of the Workforce investment Act, fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through the allotments made under sections 127 and 132. (Sec. 112(b)(11).
- B. The State assures that it will comply with section 184(a)(6), which requires the Governor to, every two years, certify to the Secretary, that--
 - 1. the State has implemented the uniform administrative requirements referred to in section 184(a)(3);
 - 2. the State has annually monitored local areas to ensure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements as required under section 184(a)(4); and (C) the State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance pursuant to section 184(a)(5). (Sec. 184(a)(6).)

- C. The State assures that the adult and youth funds received under the Workforce Investment Act will be distributed equitably throughout the State, and that no local areas will suffer significant shifts in funding from year to year during the period covered by this plan. (Sec.112(b)(12)(B).)
- D. The State assures that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in section 134 of the Workforce Investment Act, to the extent practicable.(Sec. 112(b)(17)(B).)
- E. The State assures that the Governor shall, once every two years, certify one local board for each local area in the State. (Sec. 117(c)(2).)
- F. The State assures that it will comply with the confidentiality requirements of section 136(f)(3).
- G. The State assures that no funds received under the Workforce Investment Act will be used to assist, promote, or deter union organizing. (Sec. 181(b)(7).)
- H. The State assures that it will comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of section 188, including an assurance that a Methods of Administration has been developed and implemented (Sec. 188.)
- I. The State assures that it will collect and maintain data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of section 188. (Sec. 185.).
- J. The State assures that it will comply with the grant procedures prescribed by the Secretary (pursuant to the authority at section 189(c) of the Act) that are necessary to enter into grant agreements for the allocation and payment of funds under the Act. The procedures and agreements will be provided to the State by the ETA Office of Grants and Contract Management and will specify the required terms and conditions and assurances and certifications, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - General Administrative Requirements:
 - 29 CFR part 97--Uniform Administrative Requirements for State and Local Governments (as amended by the Act).
 - 29 CFR part 96 (as amended by OMB Circular A-133)--Single Audit Act.
 - OMB Circular A-87--Cost Principles (as amended by the Act)
 - Assurances and Certifications:
 - SF 424 B--Assurances for Nonconstruction Programs.
 - 29 CFR part 31, 32--Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Assurance (and regulation).
 - CFR part 93--Certification Regarding Lobbying (and regulation).
 - 29 CFR part 98--Drug Free Workplace and Debarment and Suspension Certifications (and regulation).
 - Special Clauses/Provisions:
 - Other special assurances or provisions as may be required under Federal law or policy, including specific appropriations legislation, the Workforce Investment Act, or subsequent Executive or Congressional mandates.
- K. The State certifies that the Wagner-Peyser Act Plan, which is part of this document, has been certified by the State Employment Security Administrator.
- L. The State certifies that veterans' services provided with Wagner-Peyser Act funds will be in compliance with 38 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 20 CFR part 1001.

- M. The State certifies that Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities will be provided by merit-based public employees.
- N. The State certifies that Workforce Investment Act section 167 grantees, advocacy groups as described in the Wagner-Peyser Act (e.g., veterans, migrant and seasonal farm workers, people with disabilities, UI claimants), the State monitor advocate, agricultural organizations, and employers were given the opportunity to comment on the Wagner-Peyser Act grant document for agricultural services and local office affirmative action plans and that affirmative action plans have been included for designated offices.
- O. The State assures that it will comply with the annual Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker significant office requirements in accordance with 20 CFR part 653.
- P. The State has developed this Plan in consultation with local elected officials, local workforce boards, the business community, labor organizations and other partners
- Q. The State assures that it will comply with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794) and the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USE 12101 et seq.).
- R. The State assures that funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act and the Wagner-Peyser Act legislation, regulations, written Department of Labor Guidance, and all other applicable Federal and State laws.
- S. As a condition to the award of financial assistance from the Department of Labor under Title I of WIA, the grant applicant assures that it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the following laws:
- Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which prohibits discrimination against all individuals in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, and against beneficiaries on the basis of either citizenship/status as a lawfully admitted immigrant authorized to work in the United States or participation in any WIA Title I--financially assisted program or activity;
 - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color and national origin;
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities;
 - The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs.

The grant applicant also assures that it will comply with 29 CFR part 37 and all other regulations implementing the laws listed above. This assurance applies to the grant applicant's operation of the WIA Title I-financially assisted program or activity, and to all agreements the grant applicant makes to carry out the WIA Title I- financially assisted program or activity. The grant applicant understands that the United States has the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance.

VII. Program Administration Designees and Plan Signature

Name of WIA Title I Grant Recipient Agency

Mississippi Development Authority
Address: Post Office Box 849
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0849
Telephone Number: (601) 359-3449
Facsimile Number: (601) 359-2832

Name of WIA Title I Signatory Official

Mr. J. Stephen Hale, Executive Director
Mississippi Development Authority
Address: Post Office Box 849
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0849
Telephone Number: (601) 359-3449
Facsimile Number: (601) 359-2832

Name of WIA Title I Liaison

Mr. James R. Lott, Director - Employment Training Division
Address: Post Office Box 24568
Jackson, Mississippi 39225-4568
Telephone Number: (601) 949-2234
Facsimile Number: (601) 949-2291

Name of Wagner-Peyser Act Grant Recipient/State Employment Security Agency

Mississippi Employment Security Commission
Address: Post Office Box 1699
Jackson, MS 39215-1699
Telephone Number: (601) 354-8711
Facsimile Number: (601) 961-7405

Name and Title of State Employment Security Administrator (Signatory Official)

Mr. Curtis C. Thompson, Executive Director
Address: Post Office Box 1699
Jackson, MS 39215-1699
Telephone Number: (601) 354-8711
Facsimile Number: (601) 961-7405

SUBMISSION APPROVAL:

J. Stephen Hale, Executive Director
Mississippi Development Authority

Date